813.52
Op62

Oppenheim,
The nir

813.52
Op62

Oppenheim, James
The nine-tenths

c.1

c.1

COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS
LIBRARY

DISCARDED

THE NINE-TENTHS

A NOVEL

BY

JAMES OPPENHEIM

THE GREGG PRESS
UPPER SADDLE RIVER, N.J.

COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS
LIBRARY

First published in 1911 by Harper & Brothers Publishers
Republished in 1968 by
The Gregg Press
121 Pleasant Avenue
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, U. S. A.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 68 - 57543

Printed in United States of America

TO
THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/ninetenthsnovel0000jame

AMERICAN NOVELS OF MUCKRAKING, PROPAGANDA, AND SOCIAL PROTEST

The United States has suffered quite a few spells of sickness, if one may judge by the long and varied procession of novels dealing with the ills of its society. As each generation has sought assurances for the social hope that springs eternal in a democracy, muckraking, propagandizing, and advocating reforms have been not only implicit in partisan politics but also germane to literary production. While it has been said that Americans are readier to believe in charlatans than in utopias, there remains a sneaking feeling that maybe Oscar Wilde was right when he remarked: "Progress is the realization of utopias." Some such moral—if indeed moral it be—may be derived from the Gregg series of "American Novels of Muckraking, Propaganda, and Social Protest."

One purpose underlying the selection of the titles in the series is to provide examples of socio-economic novels which are presently out of print but which are nevertheless important in showing the history of the genre, a topic so far treated by historians only sporadically. Most of these works can rarely be found in the original editions; and many were printed on paper which is beginning to shatter. The series should prove a boon to librarians and to scholars who work in the fields of literary history and the social sciences. Its usefulness as supplementary reading for college courses in American studies and social history speaks for itself.

In turning the pages of the novels we begin with the groping 1830's and the fabulous 40's—when, as Emerson put it, every man in New England was running around with a plan for reorganizing society in his vestpocket. And we end with the "Era of the Muckrakers"—when the long-existent fervor to remake the world nearer to the mind's desire became a contagious fever, and phrases were bandied about like "frenzied finance," "conspicuous consumption," "malefactors of great wealth," "how the other half lives" and "the shame of the cities." In this series we find artifacts from the days following the panic of 1837, when Horace Greeley devoted a regular column in his *Tribune* to the kind of "associationism" that overtook Brook Farm; and we come along to the period early in the present century when the "yellow" journalism of Hearst and Pulitzer reached full flower and young Sinclair

Lewis swept the floors of Helicon Hall, the socialist community supported by Upton Sinclair with the profits of *The Jungle.* That was the epoch when the young intellectuals stormed college halls to hear Jack London expound the principles of socialism. In between, we find specimens emanating from the Gilded Age, with the ensuing clamor against business combinations eventuating in the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890, and the agricultural depression that aroused Midwestern farmers to "raise less corn and more hell" or to align themselves with the People's Party. Business panics in 1873 and 1893 stirred up the coals, young preachers discovered the social gospel, bewhiskered anarchists were the chief "reds," strikes became for the first time a matter of wide public concern, and the play based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the best money-maker on the stage.

One of the features of the list is a careful selection of works concerned with the Negro. The earliest is *The Slave,* by the historian Richard Hildreth. It was not only the first fully developed antislavery novel, but a pattern-maker for the many subsequent tales presenting the chief character as a light-skinned mulatto. The Russians translated it in the 1950's. Another is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred,* a sequel to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and perhaps more cogent propaganda. The idea that the Negro is constitutionally unable to cope with American society is curiously set forth in *Liberia,* by Sarah J. Hale, a staunch Yankee best known for her verses about Mary and her little lamb. Mrs. Hale was propagandizing for solving the slavery problem by returning the Negroes to Africa. Presenting the Southern side, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin,* by Mary H. Eastman, has been chosen from the batch of novels which sought in vain to counter the effect of Mrs. Stowe's world-famed classic of protest. The blasting of Northern prejudice against the Negro after the Civil War is well illustrated in two works: Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict,* a title still apt a century after it first appeared, and Albion W. Tourgée's tract for the times *Pactolus Prime,* which vitriolically scores the essential prejudice of white against black and is, apparently, the first American novel dealing with the Negro problem with a setting in Washington, D. C.

Joaquin Miller's *Life Amongst the Modocs* deals with the mistreatment of Indians. Few in number but judiciously chosen for illustrative purposes are stories exposing the white slave traffic—

from the days when the Mann Act was legislated and city slums were being muckraked both in and out of fiction to a degree probably more thorough than is the case even today. Among the other problems considered in these stories are divorce, prisons, and the criminal code, political corruption, pacificism, states rights, the social responsibilities of the churches, the plight of the Jew and the Immigrant, and even medical frauds.

But the theme governing the largest single element in this collection is the business tycoon and the battle between the capitalist power elite and the working class. The range in the picturization of "the typical American figure," as Henry James declared the captain of industry to be, runs quite a gamut in the series, from the romantic treatment in *Sevenoaks,* by the first editor of *Scribner's Magazine,* to the excoriation of corporation machinations by avowed socialists not unacquainted with Karl Marx. The tycoons pilloried range from bankers, real estate promoters, mill owners, and railroad magnates to lumber barons. One might view the development of this theme in the amazing profusion of fictional examples as a symbol of the growing unrest precipitated in a traditionally agrarian society bewildered by its confrontation with huge industrial corporations and big cities. But possibly it proves no more than the homely wisdom distilled into the humorist's wisecrack: "We have met the enemy—and the enemy is us!"

PROFESSOR CLARENCE GOHDES
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

September, 1968

JAMES OPPENHEIM

James Oppenheim was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1882 of Jewish parents and died in 1932. His father was a member of the State Legislature. In 1884 the family moved to New York. Oppenheim attended Columbia University from 1901 to 1903, but did not graduate, choosing instead to become a teacher and social worker in the slums of the Lower East Side. From 1903 to 1905 he was assistant director of the Hudson Guild Settlement, and from 1905 to 1907 he headed the Hebrew Technical School for Girls. In 1916, with Waldo Frank and Paul Rosenfeld, he founded and edited *The Seven Arts,* a review which in its one year of existence published writers such as Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, John Reed, John Dos Passos, and Theodore Dreiser. *The Seven Arts* folded when its patriotic financial backers withdrew their support, angered by the refusal of the editors to support American entry into the War. During this period Oppenheim became interested in psychiatry, possibly because of domestic miseries. He published several books of essays which popularized the psychoanalytic theories of the time.

Oppenheim considered himself to be a poet who for various reasons ventured into other literary forms. His first book of verses, *Monday Morning and Other Poems,* appeared in 1909. He published seven other volumes of poetry, the best of which is probably *Songs for the New Age* (1914). Louis Untermeyer described these as "psalms rather than songs." They show the influence of the Bible, Whitman, and Freud.

Oppenheim's life was deeply rooted in Greenwich Village, and he was one of the first of many artists to live and work there. His first book of stories, *Dr. Rast* (1909), drew heavily upon this background of tenement misery, social unrest, and Bohemian life. *Wild Oats* (1910) was his first muckraking novel. It is a work which deals with the effects of venereal disease, a taboo subject even among the muckrakers. *The Nine-Tenths* and *Pay Envelopes* (both 1911) develop the themes introduced in *Dr. Rast*: the sufferings of the workers and immigrants, especially women.

Idle Wives (1914) is a social satire that created a scandal when Oppenheim's wife, during divorce proceedings, charged that he had used her as a model for the parasitic, socially ambitious heroine of the tale.

The Nine-Tenths is one of the few muckraking novels to concern itself primarily with militant labor movements and the general strike. Others are Edward King's *Joseph Zalmonah,* Leroy Scott's *The Walking Delegate,* Isaac Friedman's *By Bread Alone,* and Sinclair's *King Coal.* Oppenheim's work describes the first full-scale confrontation between employers and employees of the New York garment industry. This occurred in 1909. In November of that year, shirtwaist-makers and dressmakers, most of them girls, met in Cooper Union and, inspired by the speeches of a girl agitator, voted a general strike. In spite of cold, starvation, the assaults of management goons, and the calculated injustices perpetrated by police, lawyers, and judges, the girls held out for several months, gaining a few concessions and wide public sympathy. The strikers were aided by many of the wealthy "uptown" people and by college students, particularly idealistic and dedicated young women caught up in the female emancipation movement.

Like Oppenheim, the hero of *The Nine-Tenths* is born into reasonably comfortable middle-class circumstances, but converts to Socialism under the stress of a situation which suddenly places before his eyes the misery and exploitation which surround him. Joe Blaine is "an average American—clean of mind and body, cheerful, hard-working, democratic, willing to live and let live, and striving with all his heart and soul for success." With a small inheritance, he begins a print shop in lower Manhattan, and builds it into a flourishing enterprise. The plant burns down and many of his employees die in the flames and in falls from defective fire escapes. Worse yet, most of the victims are young girls. Joe is shocked into questioning the system of values by which he has been living: a system described to him by a union leader as one in which "The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred." Joe decides to dedicate his life to the memory of the dead girls and to the "crowded, scrambling, disorganized horde of the toilers." He moves from his comfortable lodgings

to the squalor of West Tenth Street and establishes a pro-labor newspaper called *The Nine-Tenths,* which prints "news of all the forces working for betterment. . .but no bitterness, no bomb-throwing." As Editor and major contributor, he is forced to visit places which he never dreamed existed: the reeking hovels of the Irish and Italian immigrants, hideous sweatshops, courtrooms filled with the wretched on their way to prison, cheap saloons, and meeting halls where agitators plan the destruction of the existing social order. He learns to his astonishment that the big dailies suppress any mention of strikes, some of which involve tens of thousands of workers and entire industries. The paper flourishes until a sweatshop owner, infuriated by Joe's descriptions of conditions in his factory, sends a gang of hoodlums to wreck the presses. Joe is beaten, but recovers and re-establishes the paper at an even greater circulation.

The conclusion of *The Nine-Tenths* is curious. Joe's newspaper has been instrumental in bringing about a strike which bankrupts several garment-makers. One of them confronts the Editor and accuses him of having ruined his business and his life: "there was fierce competition. . .and I had to pay small wages." Joe is conscience stricken for the second time, and undergoes a second "conversion." This time he rejects the Marxist ideology which divides society into two armed camps engaged in mortal combat. He sees a vague, ethereal vision of a city of "five million comrades" who "create all of beauty and use that man may need"; a city of "sparkling homes, of wondrous art, and joyous festival." He also realizes that present misery is the fault of all men, for all, not just property owners, are involved in the corruption of society.

With the possible exception of the unconvincing events of the last chapter, *The Nine-Tenths* is a very good novel from both the point of view of literature and that of muckraking. It is written with a minimum of didacticism. The style is frequently charged with poetry, for the author had an eye for the strange, fragmented beauty of New York, as well as for its social horrors. He portrays the women of the poor with a sympathy and tolerance rare among the muckrakers, who were generally more interested in describing "cases." Oppenheim's passion for depicting "the very swarm and drama and blooded life of humanity" is the strength of this book.

Upper Saddle River, N. J.
September, 1968

F. C. S.

CONTENTS

PART I

THE DREAM

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	The Printery	1
II.	The East Eighty-first Street Fire	13
III.	The Good People	21
IV.	Golden October	40
V.	Myra and Joe	61
VI.	Marty Briggs	77
VII.	Last of Joe Blain and His Men	88
VIII	The Wind in the Oaks	101

PART II

THE TEST

I.	Beginnings	109
II.	The Nine-Tenths	119
III.	Others: and Sally Heffer	137
IV.	Others: and Theodore Marrin	164
V.	Forty-five Treacherous Men	180
VI.	A Fight in Good Earnest	194
VII.	Of the Thirty Thousand	212
VIII.	The Arrest	237
IX.	Rhona	248
X.	The Trial	259
XI.	The Workhouse	274
XII.	Confident Morning	285
XIII.	The City	313

PART I

THE DREAM

THE NINE-TENTHS

I

THE PRINTERY

THAT windy autumn noon the young girls of the hat factory darted out of the loft building and came running back with cans of coffee, and bags of candy, and packages of sandwiches and cakes. They frisked hilariously before the wind, with flying hair and sparkling eyes, and crowded into the narrow entrance with the grimy pressmen of the eighth floor. Over and over again the one frail elevator was jammed with the laughing crowd and shot up to the hat factory on the ninth floor and back.

The men smoked cigarettes as the girls chattered and flirted with them, and the talk was fast and free.

At the eighth floor the pressmen got off, still smoking, for "Mr. Joe" was still out. Even after the presses started up they went on surreptitiously, though near one group of them in a dark corner of the printery lay a careless heap of

cotton waste, thoroughly soaked with machine-oil. This heap had been passed by the factory inspector unnoticed, the pressmen took it for granted, and Joe, in his slipshod manner, gave it no thought. Later that very afternoon as the opening of the hall door rang a bell sharply and Joe came in, the men swiftly and guiltily flung their lighted cigarettes to the floor and stepped them out or crumpled them with stinging fingers in their pockets. But Joe did not even notice the clinging cigarette smell that infected the strange printery atmosphere, that mingled with its delightful odor of the freshly printed page, damp, bitter-sweet, new. Once Marty Briggs, the fat foreman, had spoken to Joe of the breaking of the "No Smoking" rule, but Joe had said, with his luminous, soft smile:

"Marty, the boys are only human—they see me smoking in the private office!"

Up and down the long, narrow, eighth-floor loft the great intricate presses stood in shadowy bulk, and the intense gray air was spotted here and there with a dangling naked electric bulb, under whose radiance the greasy, grimy men came and went, pulling out heaps of paper, sliding in sheets, tinkering at the machinery. Overhead whirled and traveled a complex system of wheels and belting, whirring, thumping, and turning, and the floor, the walls, the very door trembled with the shaking of the presses and made the body of every man there pleasantly quiver.

THE PRINTERY

The stir of the hat factory on the floor above mingled with the stir of the presses, and Joe loved it all, even as he loved the presence of the young girls about him. Some of these girls were Bohemians, others Jewish, a few American. They gave to the gaunt, smoky building a touch as of a wild rose on a gray rock-heap—a touch of color and of melody. Joe, at noon, would purposely linger near the open doorway to get a glimpse of their bright faces and a snatch of their careless laughter. Some of the girls knew him and would nod to him on the street—their hearts went out to the tall, homely, sorrowful fellow.

But his printery was his chief passion. It absorbed him by its masterful stress, overwhelming every sense, trembling, thundering, clanking, flashing, catching his eye with turning wheels and chewing press-mouths, and enveloping him in something tremulously homelike and elemental. Even that afternoon as Joe stood at the high wall-desk near the door, under a golden bulb of light, figuring on contracts with Marty Briggs, he felt his singular happiness of belonging. Here he had spent the work hours of the last ten years; he was a living part of this living press-room; this was as native to him as the sea to a fish. And glancing about the crowded gray room, everything seemed so safe, secure, unending, as if it would last forever.

Up to that very evening Joe had been merely an average American—clean of mind and body,

cheerful, hard-working, democratic, willing to live and let live, and striving with all his heart and soul for success. His father had served in the Civil War and came back to New York with his right sleeve pinned up, an emaciated and sick man. Then Joe's mother had overridden the less imperious will of the soldier and married him, and they had settled down in the city. Henry Blaine learned to write with his left hand and became a clerk. It was the only work he could do. Then, as his health became worse and worse, he was ordered to live in the country (that was in 1868), and as the young couple had scarcely any money they were glad to get a little shanty on the stony hill which is now the corner of Eighty-first Street and Lexington Avenue and is the site of a modern apartment-house. But Joe's mother was glad even of a shanty; she made an adventure of it; she called herself the wife of a pioneer, and said that they were making a clearing in the Western wilderness.

Here in 1872 Joe was born, and he was hardly old enough to crawl about when his father became too sick to work, and his mother had to leave "her two men" home together and go out and do such work as she could. This consisted largely in reading to old ladies in the neighborhood, though sometimes she had to do fancy needlework and sometimes take in washing. Of these last achievements she was justly proud, though it made Henry Blaine wince with shame.

THE PRINTERY

Joe was only six years old when his father died, and from then on he and his mother fought it out together. The boy entered the public school on Seventy-ninth Street, and grew amazingly, his mind keeping pace. He was a splendid absorber of good books; and his mother taught him her poets and they went through English literature together.

Yorkville sprang up, a rubber-stamped neighborhood, of which each street was a brownstone duplicate of the next. The rocky hill became valuable and went for twenty thousand dollars, of which three thousand had to be deducted for the mortgage. Then Joe graduated from high school, and, lusting for life, took a clerk's job with one of the big express companies. He held this for two years, and learned an interesting fact —namely, that a clerk's life began at 5 P.M. and ended at 8.30 A.M. In between the clerk was a dead but skilled machine that did the work of a child. He learned, besides, that advancement was slow and only for a few, and he saw these few, men past middle life, still underlings. A man of forty-five with a salary of three thousand was doing remarkably well, and, as a rule, he was a dried-up, negative, timid creature.

Out of all this he went like a stick of dynamite, took the seventeen thousand dollars and went into his father's business of printing. Joe was shrewd, despite his open nature; he never liked to be "done"; and so he made money and made

it fast. Besides his printing he did some speculating in real estate, and so at thirty-eight he was a successful business man and could count himself worth nearly a hundred thousand dollars. He made little use of this money; his was a simple, serious, fun-loving nature, and all his early training had made for plain living and economy. And so for years he and his mother had boarded in a brownstone boarding-house in the quiet block west of Lexington Avenue up the street. They spent very little on themselves. In fact, Joe was too busy. He was all absorbed in the printery—he worked early and late—and of recent years in the stress of business his fine relationship with his mother had rather thinned out. They began leading separated lives; they began shutting themselves away from each other.

And so here he was, thirty-eight years of his life gone, and what had it all been? Merely the narrow, steady, city man's life — work, rest, a little recreation, sleep. Outside his mother, his employees, his customers, and the newspapers he knew little of the million-crowded life of the city about him. He used but one set of streets daily; he did not penetrate the vast areas of existence that cluttered the acres of stone in every direction. There stood the city, a great fact, and even that afternoon as the wild autumn wind blew from the west and rapid, ragged cloud masses passed huge shadows over the ship-swept Hudson, darkened briefly the hurrying streets, ex-

tinguished for a moment the glitter of a sky-scraper and went gray-footed over the flats of Long Island, even at that moment terrific forces, fierce aggregations of man-power, gigantic blasts of tamed electricity, gravitation, fire, and steam and steel, made the hidden life of the city cyclonic. And in that mesh of nature and man the human comedy went on — there was love and disaster, frolic and the fall of a child, the boy buying candy in a shop, the woman on the operating-table in the hospital. Who could measure that swirl of life and whither it was leading? But who could live in the heart of it all and be unaware of it?

Yet Joe's eyes were unseeing. Children played on the street, people walked and talked, the toilers were busy at their tasks, and that was all he knew or saw. And yet of late he had a new, unexpected vista of life. Like many men, Joe had missed women. There was his mother, but no one else. He was rather shy, and he was too busy. But during the last few months a teacher—Myra Craig—had been coming to the printery to have some work done for the school. She had strangely affected Joe—sprung an electricity on him that troubled him profoundly. He could not forget her, nor wipe her image from his brain, nor rid his ears of the echoes of her voice. He went about feeling that possibly he had underrated poetry and music. Romance, led by Myra's hand, had entered the dusty print-

ery and Joe began to feel like a youngster who had been blind to life.

Outside the world was blowing away on the gray wings of the twilight, blowing away with eddies of dust that swept the sparkling street-lamps, and the air was sharp with a tang of homesickness and autumn. The afternoon was quietly waning, up-stairs the hat-makers, and here the printers, were toiling in a crowded, satisfying present, and Joe stood there musing, a tall, gaunt man, the upstart tufts of his tousled hair glistening in the light overhead. His face was the homeliest that ever happened. The mouth was big and big-lipped, the eyes large, dark, melancholy and slightly sunken, and the mask was a network of wrinkles. His hands were large, mobile, and homely. But about him was an air of character and thought, of kindliness and camaraderie, of very human nature. He stood there wishing that Myra would come. The day seemed to demand it; the wild autumn cried out for men to seek the warmth and forgetful glory of love.

He could get some nice house and make a home for her; he could take her out of the grind and deadliness of school-work and make her happy; there would be little children in that house. He thought she loved him; yes, he was quite sure. Then what hindrance? There, at quarter to five that strange afternoon, Joe felt that he had reached the heights of success, and

he saw no obstacle to long years of solid advance. He had before his eyes the evidence of his wealth —the great, flapping presses, the bending, moving men. If anything was sure and solid in this world, these things were.

He felt sure Myra would come. She had not been around for a week, and, anticipating a new meeting with her, he felt very young, like a very young man for the first time aware of the strange loveliness of night, its haunting and hidden beauties, its women calling from afar. It all seemed wild and impossible romance. It smote his heart-strings and set them trembling with music. He wondered why he had been so stupid all these years and evaded life, evaded joys that should have been his twenty years earlier. Now it seemed to him that his youth had passed from him defeated of its splendor.

If Myra came to-day he would tell her. The very thought gave his heart a lovely quake of fear, a trembling that communicated itself to his hands and down his legs, a throbbing joy dashed with a strange tremor. And then as he wanted, as he wished for, the door beside him opened and the bell sharply sounded.

She stood there, very small, very slight, but quite charming in her neat, lace-touched clothes. A fringe at the wrist, a bunch at the neck, struck her off as some one delicate and sensitive, and the face strengthened this impression. It was long and oval, with a narrow woman-forehead

cut off by a curve of dark hair; the mouth was small and sweet; the nose narrow; the eyes large, clear gray, penetrating. Under the gracefully modeled felt hat she stood quite complete, quite a personality. One instantly guessed that she was an aristocrat by birth and breeding. But her age was doubtful, seeming either more or less than the total, which was thirty-two.

There she stood, glancing at Joe with a breathless eagerness. He turned pale, and yet at the same time there was a whirl of fire in his heart. She had come to him; he wanted to gather her close and bear her off through the wild autumn weather, off to the wilderness. He reached out a hand and inclosed a very cold and very little one.

"Why, you're frozen!" he said, with a queer laugh.

"Oh—not much!" she gasped. She held her leather bag under her arm and took off her gloves. Then she loosened her coat, and gave a sigh.

He gazed at her warm-tinted cheek, almost losing himself, and then murmured, suddenly:

"More school stuff?"

She made a grimace and tried to speak lightly, but her voice almost failed her.

"Class 6–B, let me tell you, is giving the 'Landing of the Pilgrims,' and every blessed little pilgrim is Bohemian. Here's the programme!"

With trembling fingers she opened her bag and handed him some loose sheets. He bent over them at once.

"Now make it cheap, Mr. Blaine," she said, severely. "Rock bottom! Or I'll give the job to some one else."

Joe laughed strangely.

"How many copies?"

"One thousand."

He spoke as if in fear.

"Fifty cents too much?"

Myra laughed.

"I don't want the school to ruin you!"

He said nothing further, and in the awkward silence she began pitifully to button her coat. There was no reason for staying.

Then suddenly he spoke, huskily:

"Don't go, Miss Craig. . . ."

"You want . . ." she began.

He leaned very close.

"I want to take a walk with you. May I?"

She became dead white, and the terror of nature's resistless purpose with men and women, that awful gravitation, that passion of creation that links worlds and uses men and women, went through them both.

"I may?" he was whispering.

Her "Yes" was almost inaudible.

So Joe put on his coat, and slapped over his head a queer gray slouch hat, and called over Marty.

"I won't be back to-night, Marty!" he said.

Then at the door he gave one last glance at his life-work, the orderly presses, the harnessed men, and left it all as if it must surely be there when he returned. He was proud at that moment to be Joe Blaine, with his name in red letters on the glass door, and under his name "Power Printer." His wife would be able to hold her head high.

The frail elevator took them clanking, bumping, slipping, down, down past eight floors, to the street level. The elevator boy, puffing at his cigarette, remarked, amiably:

"Gee! it's a windy day. It's gittin' on to winter, all right. . . . Good-night, Mr. Blaine!"

"Good-night, Tom," said Joe.

II

THE EAST EIGHTY-FIRST STREET FIRE

THEY emerged in all the magic wildness of an autumn night and walked east on Eighty-first Street. The loft building was near the corner of Second Avenue. They passed under the elevated structure, cutting through a hurrying throng of people.

"Take my arm," cried Joe.

She took it, trembling. They made an odd couple passing along between the squalid red-brick tenements, now in shadow, now in the glow of some little shop window, now under a sparkling lamp. At Avenue A they went south to Seventy-ninth Street, and again turned east, passing a row of bright model tenements, emerging at last at the strange riverside.

Down to the very edge of the unpaved waste they walked, or rather floated, so strange and uplifted and glorious they felt, blown and carried bodily with the exultant west wind, and they only stopped when they reached the wooden margin, where an old scow, half laden with brick, was moored fast with ropes. This scow heaved up and down with the motion of the

rolling waters; the tight ropes grated; the water swashed melodiously.

The man and woman seemed alone there, a black little lump in the vast spaces, for behind them the city receded beyond empty little hillsides and there was nothing some distance north and south.

"Look," said Joe, "look at the tide!"

It was running north, a wide expanse of rolling waters from their feet to Blackwells Island in the east, all hurling swiftly like a billowing floor of gray. Here and there whitecaps spouted. On Blackwells Island loomed the gray hospitals and workhouses, and at intervals on the shore sparkled a friendly light.

"But see the bridge," exclaimed Myra.

She pointed far south, where across the last of the day ran a slightly arched string of lights, binding shore with shore. On the New York side, and nearer, rose the high chimneys of mills, and from these a purplish smoke swirled thickly, melting into the gray weather.

And it seemed to Joe at that wild moment that nothing was as beautiful as smoking chimneys. They meant so much—labor, human beings, fire, warmth.

And over all—river, bridge, chimneys, Blackwells Island, and the throbbing city behind them —rose the immense gray-clouded heavens. A keen smell of the far ocean came to their nostrils and the air was clear and exhilarant. Then, as

they watched, suddenly a tug lashed between enormous flat boats on which were red freight-cars, swept north with the tide. A thin glaze of heat breathed up from the tug's pipe; it was moving without its engines, and the sight was unbelievable. The whole huge mass simply shot the river, racing by them.

And then the very magic of life was theirs. The world fell from them, the dusty scales of facts, the complex intricacies of existence melted away. They were very close, and the keen, yelling wind was wrapping them closer. Vision filled the gray air, trembled up from the river to the heavens. They rose from all the chaos like two white flames blown by the wind together—they were two gigantic powers of the earth preparing like gods for new creation. In that throbbing moment each became the world to the other, and love, death-strong, shot their hearts.

He turned, gazing strangely at her pale, eager, breathless face.

"I want . . ." he began.

"Yes," she breathed.

He opened his lips, and the sound that escaped seemed like a sob.

"Myra!"

And then at the sound of her name she was all woman, all love. She cried out:

"Joe!"

And they flung their arms round each other.

She sobbed there, overcome with the yearning, the glory, the beatitude of that moment.

"Oh," he cried, "how I love you! . . . Myra . . ."

"Joe, Joe—I couldn't have stood it longer!"

All of life, all of the past, all of the million years of earth melted into that moment, that moment when a man and a woman, mingled into one, stood in the heart of the wonder, the love, the purpose of nature—a mad, wild, incoherent half-hour, a secret ecstasy in the passing of the twilight, in the swing of the wind and the breath of the sea.

"Come home to my mother," cried Joe. "Come home with me!"

They turned . . . and Myra was a strange new woman, tender, grave, and wrought of all lovely power, her face, in the last of the light, mellow and softly glowing with a heightened woman-power.

"Yes," she said, "I want to see Joe's mother."

It was Joe's last step to success. Now he had all—his work, his love. He felt powerfully masculine, triumphant, glorious.

Night had fallen, and on the darkness broke and sparkled a thousand lights in tenement windows and up the shadowy streets—everywhere homes, families; men, women, and children busily living together; everywhere love. Joe glanced, his eyes filling. Then he paused.

"Look at that," he said in a changed voice.

Over against the west, a little to the north, the gray heavens were visible—a lightning seemed to run over them—a ghastly red lightning—sharply silhouetting the chimneyed housetops.

"What is it?" said Myra.

He gazed at it, transfixed.

"That's a fire . . . a big fire." Then suddenly his face, in the pale light of a street-lamp, became chalky white and knotted. He could barely speak. "It must be on Eighty-first or Eighty-second Street."

She spoke shrilly, clutching his arm.

"Not . . . the loft?"

"Oh, it can't be!" he cried, in an agony. "But come . . . hurry . . ."

They started toward Eighty-first Street up Avenue A. They walked fast; and it seemed suddenly to Joe that he had been dancing on a thin crust, and that the crust had broken and he was falling through. He turned and spoke harshly:

"You must run!"

Fear made their feet heavy as they sped, and their hearts seemed to be exploding in their breasts. They felt as if that fire were consuming them; as if its tongues of flame licked them up. And so they came to the corner of Eighty-first Street and turned it, and looked, and stopped.

Joe spoke hoarsely.

"It's burning; . . . it's the loft. . . . The printery's on fire. . . ."

Beyond the elevated structure at Second Avenue the loft building rose like a grotesque gigantic torch in the night. Swirls of flame rolled from the upper three stories upward in a mane of red, tossing volumes of smoke, and the wild wind, combing the fire from the west, rained down cinders and burned papers on Joe and Myra as they rushed up the street. Every window was blankly visible in the extreme light, streams of water played on the walls, and the night throbbed with the palpitating, pounding fire-engines.

And it seemed to Joe as if life were torn to bits, as if the world's end had come. It was unbelievable, impossible—his eyes belied his brain. That all those years of labor and dream and effort were going up in flame and smoke seemed preposterous. And only a few moments before he and Myra had stood on the heights of the world; had their mad moment; and even then his life was being burned away from him. He felt the hoarse sobs lifting up through his throat.

They reached Second Avenue, and were stopped by the vast swaying crowd of people, a density that could not be cloven. They went around about it frantically; they bore along the edge of the crowd, beside the houses; they wedged past one stoop; they were about to get past the next, when, in the light of the lamp, Joe saw a strange sight. Crouched on that stoop, with clothes torn, with hair loosed down her back,

her face white, her lips gasping, sat one of the hat factory girls. It was Fannie Lemick. Joe knew her. And no one seemed to notice her. The crowd was absorbed in other things.

And even at that moment Joe heard the dire clanging of ambulances, and an awful horror dizzied his brain. No, no, not that! He clutched the stoop-post, leaned, cried weirdly:

"Fannie! Fannie!"

She gazed up at him. Then she recognized him and gave a terrible sob.

"Mr. Joe! Oh, how did you get out?"

"I wasn't there," he breathed. "Fannie! what's happened? . . . None of the girls . . ."

"You didn't know?" she gasped.

He felt the life leaving his body; it seemed impossible.

"No . . ." he heard himself saying. "Tell me . . ."

She looked at him with dreadful eyes and spoke in a low, deadly, monotonous voice:

"The fire-escape was no good; it broke under some of the girls; . . . they fell; . . . we jammed the hall; . . . some of the girls jumped down the elevator shaft; . . . they couldn't get out . . . and Miss Marks, the forelady, was trying to keep us in order. . . . She stayed there . . . and I ran down the stairs, and dropped in the smoke, and crawled . . . but when I got to the street . . . I looked back . . . Mr. Joe . . . the girls were jumping from the windows. . . ."

Joe seized the stoop-post. His body seemed torn in two; he began to reel.

"From the ninth floor," he muttered, "and couldn't get out. . . . And I wasn't there! Oh, God, why wasn't I killed there!"

III

THE GOOD PEOPLE

JOE broke through the fire line. He stepped like a calcium-lit figure over the wet, gleaming pavement, over the snaky hose, and among the rubber-sheathed, glistening firemen, gave one look at the ghastly heap on the sidewalk, and then became, like the host of raving relatives and friends and lovers, a man insane. It was as if the common surfaces of life — the busy days, the labor, the tools, the houses—had been drawn aside like a curtain and revealed the terrific powers that engulf humanity.

In his ears sounded the hoarse cries of the firemen, the shout of the sprayed water, the crash of axes, the shatter of glass. It was too magnificent a spectacle, nature, like a Nero, using humanity to make a sublime torch in the night. And through his head pulsed and pulsed the defiant throb of the engines. Cinders fell, sticks, papers, and Joe saw fitfully the wide ring of hypnotized faces. It was as if the world had fallen into a pit, and human beings looked on each other aghast.

"Get back there!" cried a burly policeman.

Joe resisted his shouldering.

"I'm Mr. Blaine; . . . it's my loft burning. I'm looking for my men. . . ."

"Go to the morgue then," snapped the policeman. "A fire line's a fire line."

Joe was pushed back, and as the crowd closed about him, a soft pressure of clothing, men and women, he became aware of the fact that he had lost his head. He pulled himself together; he told himself that he, a human being, was greater than anything that could happen; that he must set his jaw and fight and brave his way through the facts. He must get to work.

Myra clutched his sleeve. He turned to her a face of death, but she brought her wide eyes close to him.

"Joe! Joe!"

"Myra," he said, in a whisper, suddenly in that moment getting a sharp revelation of his changed life. "I may never see you again. I belong to those dead girls." He paused. "Go home . . . do that for me, anyway."

He had passed beyond her; there was no opposing him.

"I'll go," she murmured.

Then, dizzily, she reeled back, and was lost in the crowd.

And then he set to work. He was strangely calm now, numb, unfeeling. There was nothing more to experience, and the overwrought brain refused any new emotions. So stupendous was

the catastrophe that it left him finally calm, ready, and eagerly awake. He stepped gently through the crowd, searching, and found John Rann, the pressman. John wept like a little boy when they met.

"Marty got out . . . yes . . . most of us did . . . but Eddie Baker, Morty, and Sam Bender. . . . It was the cotton waste, Mr. Joe, and the cigarettes. . . ."

Joe put his arm about the rough man.

"Never mind, Johnny. . . . Go home to the kiddies. . . ."

There was so little he could do. He went to a few homes he knew, he went to the hospital to ask after the injured, he went to the morgue. At midnight the fire, like an evil thing, drew him back, and he encountered only a steamy blackness lit by the search-light of the engine. There was still the insistent throbbing. And then he thought of his mother and her fears, and sped swiftly up the street, over deserted Lexington Avenue, and up the lamp-lit block. Already newsboys were hoarsely shouting in the night, as they waved their papers—a cry of the underworld palpitating through the hushed city: "Wuxtra! Wuxtra! Great—fire—horror! Sixty—killed! Wuxtra!"

The house was still open, lighted, awake. People came into the hall as he entered, but he shunned them and started up the stairs. One called after him.

"Your mother's out, Mr. Joe."

He turned.

"Out? How long?"

"Since the fire started. . . . She's been back and forth several times. . . ."

He went on up, entered the neat, still front room, lit the gas beside the bureau mirror, and began to pace up and down. His mother was searching for him; he might have known it; he should have remembered it.

And then he heard the uncanny shouting of the newsboys—as if those dead girls had risen from their ashes and were running like flaming furies through the city streets, flinging handfuls of their fire into a million homes, shaking New York into a realization of its careless, guilty heart, crying for vengeance, stirring horror and anger and pity. Who was the guilty one, if not he, the boss?

And then the inquisition began, the repeated sting of lashing thoughts and cruel questions. He asked himself what right he had to be an employer, to take the responsibility of thirty lives in his hands. He was careless, easy-going, he was in business for profits. Had such a man any right to be placed over others, to be given the power over other lives? The guilt was his; the blame fell on him. He should have kept clean house; he should have stamped out the smoking; he should not have smoked himself. There fell upon his shoulders a burden not to be borne, the

burden of his blame, and he felt as if nothing now in the world could assuage that sense of guilt.

Life, he found, was a fury, a cyclone, not the simple, easy affair he had thought it. It was his living for himself, his living alone, his ignorance of the fact that his life was tangled in with the lives of all human beings, so that he was socially responsible, responsible for the misery and poverty and pain all about him.

That *he* should be the one! Had he not lived just the average life—blameless, cheerful, hard-working, fun-loving—the life of the average American? Just by every-day standards his was the useful and good life. But no, that was not enough. In his rush for success he had made property his treasure instead of human beings. That was the crime. And so these dead lay all about him as if he had murdered them with his hands. It was his being an average man that had killed sixty-three girls and men. And what had he been after? Money? He did not use his money, did not need so much. Just a little shared with his employees would have saved them. No, the average man must cease to exist, and the social man take his place, the brother careful of his fellow-men, not careless of all but his own gain.

A boy passed, hoarsely shouting that terrible extra. Would nothing in the world silence that sound? The cold sweat came out on his face.

He was the guilty one. That was the one fact that he knew.

And then he paused; the door opened creakingly and his mother entered. She was a magnificent young-old woman, her body sixty-three years old, her mind singularly fresh and young. She was tall, straight, spirited, and under the neat glossy-white hair was a noble face, somewhat long, somewhat slim, a little pallid, but with firm chin and large forehead and living large black eyes set among sharp lines of lids. The whole woman was focussed in the eyes, sparkled there, lived there, deep, limpid, quick, piercing. Her pallor changed to pure whiteness.

"Joe . . ." her voice broke. "I've been looking for you. . . ."

He paused, walled away from her by years of isolation. She advanced slowly; her face became terrible in its hungry love, its mother passion. She met his eyes, and then he fled to her, and his body shook with rough, tearless sobs. Her relief came in great tears.

"And all those girls," she was murmuring, "and those men. How did it happen?"

He drew back; his eyes became strange.

"Mother," he said, harshly, "I'm the guilty one. There was a heap of cotton waste in the corner, shouldn't have been there. And I let the men smoke cigarettes."

She was horrified.

"But *why* did you do that?" she whispered, moving a little away from him.

"My thoughtlessness . . . my *business*." The word was charged with bitterness. "Business! business! I'm a business man! I wasn't in business"—he gave a weird laugh—"for the health of my employees! I was making money!"

She looked at him as if he had ceased being her son and had turned into a monster. Then she swayed, grasped the bedpost and sank on the bed.

Her voice was low and harsh.

"*Your* fault . . . and all those young girls . . ."

His mother had judged him; he looked at her with haggard eyes, and spoke in a hollow voice.

"Nothing will ever wipe this guilt from my mind. . . . I'm branded for life . . . this thing will go on and on and on every day that I live. . . ."

She glanced at him then, and saw only her son, the child she had carried in her arms, the boy who had romped with her, and she only knew now that he was suffering, that no one on earth could be in greater pain.

"Oh, my poor Joe!" she murmured.

"Yes," he went on, beside himself, "I'm blasted with guilt. . . ."

She cried out:

"If you go on like this, we'll both go out of our minds, Joe! Fight! It's done . . . it's

over. . . . From now on, make amends. . . . Joe!" — She rose magnificently then — "Your father lost his arm in the war. . . . Now give your life to setting things right!"

And she drew him close again. Her words, her love, her belief in him roused him at last.

"You know the fault isn't all yours," she said. "The factory inspector's to blame, too —and the men—and the people up-stairs— and the law because it didn't demand better protection and fire-drills—all are to blame. You take too much on yourself. . . ."

And gradually, striving with him through the early morning hours, she calmed him, she soothed him, and got him to bed. He was at last too weary to think or feel and he slept deep into the day. And thinking a little of herself, she realized that the tragedy had brought them closer together than they had been for years.

Out of those ashes on East Eighty-first Street rose a certain splendor over the city. All of New York drew together with indignation and wondrous pity. It did not bring the dead girls to life again—it was too late for that—but it brought many other dead people to life.

Fifty thousand dollars flowed to the newspapers for relief; an inquest probed causes and guilt and prevention; mass-meetings were held; the rich and the powerful forgot position

and remembered their common humanity; and the philanthropic societies set to work with money, with doctors and nurses and visitors. The head of one huge association said to the relief committee in a low, trembling voice: "Of course, our whole staff is at your service." Just for a time, a little time, the five-million-manned city flavored its confused, selfish struggle with simple brotherhood.

How had it happened? Whose was the fault? How came it that sixty girls were imprisoned in the skies, as it were, and could only fling themselves down to the stone pavement in an insanity of terror? What war was more horrible than this Peace of Industry? Such things must be prevented in future, said New York, rising like a wrathful god—and for a while the busy wheels of progress turned.

Joe had to attend the inquest as a witness. He gave his testimony in a simple, sincere, and candid way that gained him sympathy. His men testified in his behalf, trying to wholly exonerate him and inculpate themselves, and the lawyers cleverly scattered blame from one power to another—the city, the State, the fire department, the building department, etc. It became clear that Joe could not be officially punished; it was evident that he had done as much as the run of employers to protect life, and that his intentions had been blameless.

However, that did not ease Joe's real punish-

ment. He was a changed man that week, calm, ready with his smile, but haggard and bowed, nervous and overwrought, bearing a burden too heavy for his heart. He made over the twenty thousand dollars of insurance money to the Relief and Prevention Work; he visited the injured and the bereaved; he forgot Myra and tried to forget himself; he attended committee meetings.

Myra wrote him a little note:

DEAR JOE,—Don't forget that whatever happens I believe in you utterly and I love you and shall always love you, and that you have me when all else is lost.

Your MYRA.

To which he merely replied:

DEAR MYRA,—I shall remember what you say, and I shall see you when I can. Yours, JOE.

It was on Sunday afternoon that Joe met Fannie Lemick on the street. Her eyes filled with tears and he noticed she was trembling.

"Mr. Joe!" she cried.

"Yes, Fannie . . ."

"Are you going, too?"

"Going where?"

"Don't you know? *The mass-meeting at Carnegie Hall!*"

He looked at her, smiling.

"I'll go with you, if I may!"

So they went down together. A jam of

poor people was crowding the doors, and a string of automobiles drew up and passed at the curb. Joe and Fannie got in the throng. There was no room left in the orchestra and they were swept with the flood up and up, flight after flight, to the high gallery. Here they found seats and looked down, down as if on the side of the planet, on the far-away stage filled with the speakers and the committees, and on that sea of humanity that swept back and up through the boxes to themselves. All in the subdued light, the golden light that crowd sat, silent, remorseful, stirred by a sense of having risen to a great occasion; thousands of human beings, the middle class, the rich, the poor; Americans, Germans, Italians, Jews. But all about him Joe felt a silent hatred, a still cry for vengeance, a class bitterness. Many of these were relatives of the dead.

It was a demonstration of the human power that refuses to submit to environment and circumstance and fate; that rises and rebukes facts, reshapes destiny. And then the speaking began: the bishop, the rabbi, the financier, the philanthropist, the social worker. They spoke eloquently, they showed pity, they were constructive, they were prepared to act; they represented the "better classes" and promised the "poor," the toilers, that they would see that relief and protection were given; but

somehow their eloquence did not carry; somehow that mass of commonest men and women refused to be stirred and thrilled. There was even a little hissing when it was announced that a committee of big men would see to the matter.

Joe had a dull sense of some monstrous social cleavage; the world divided into the rulers and the ruled, the drivers and the driven. He felt uncomfortable, and so did the throng. There was a feeling as if the crowd ought to have a throat to give vent to some strange, fierce fact that festered in its heart.

And then toward the end the chairman announced that one of the hat-trimmers, one of the girls who worked in another hat factory, would address the meeting—Miss Sally Heffer.

A girl arose, a young woman with thin, sparse, gold-glinting hair, with face pallid and rounded, with broad forehead and gray eyes of remarkable clarity. She was slim, dressed in a little brown coat and a short brown skirt. She came forward, trembling, as if overcome by the audience. She paused, raised her head and tried to speak. There was not a sound, and suddenly the audience became strangely still, leaning forward, waiting.

Then again she tried to speak; it was hardly above a whisper; and yet so clear was the hush that Joe heard every word. And he knew, and all knew, that this young woman

was overcome, not by the audience, but by the passion of the tragedy, the passion of an oppressed class. She was the voice of the toilers at last dimly audible; she was the voice of a million years of sore labor and bitter poverty and thwarted life. And the audience was thrilled, and the powerful were shaken with remorse.

Trembling, terrible came the words out of that little body on the far stage:

"I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good-fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting. The old Inquisition had its rack and its thumbscrews and its instruments of torture with iron teeth. We know what these things are to-day: the iron teeth are our necessities, the thumbscrews the high-powered and swift machinery close to which we must work, and the rack is here in the fire-trap structures that will destroy us the minute they catch on fire.

"This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city. Every week I learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. *The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred!* There are so many of us for one job, it matters little if sixty of us are burned to death.

"We have tried you citizens; we are trying

you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers and brothers and sisters by way of a charity gift. But every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable, the strong hand of the law is allowed to press heavily down on us.

"Public officials have only words of warning to us—warning that we must be intensely orderly and intensely peaceable, and they have the workhouse just back of all their warnings.

"I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement."

Joe heard nothing further. There were several other speakers, but no words penetrated to his brain. He felt as if he must stifle. He felt the globe of earth cracking, breaking in two under his feet, and for the first time in his life he was acutely aware of the division of humanity. All through his career he had taken his middle-class position for granted; he tacitly agreed that there were employees and employers; but in his own case his camaraderie had hidden the cleavage. Now he saw a double world—on the one side the moneyed owners, on the other the crowded, scrambling, disorganized hordes of the toilers—

each one of them helpless, a victim, worked for all that was in him, and then flung aside in the scrap heap. And behold, this horde was becoming self-conscious, was beginning to organize, was finding a voice. And he, who was one of the "good people," was rejected by this voice. He had been "tried" and found wanting. He was on the other side of the fence. And it was the fault of his class that fire horrors and all the chaos and cruelty of industry arose. So that now the working people had found that they must "save themselves."

In an agony of guilt again he felt what he had said to Myra: "From now on I belong to those dead girls"—yes, and to their fellow-workers. Suddenly it seemed to him that he must see Sally Heffer — that to her he must carry the burden of his guilt—to her he must personally make answer to the terrible accusations she had voiced. It was all at once, as if only in this way could he go on living, that otherwise he would end in the insanity of the mad-house or the insanity of suicide.

He was walking down the stairs with Fannie, and he was trembling.

"Do you know this Sally Heffer?"

"Know her? We all do!" she cried, with all a young girl's enthusiasm.

"I want to see her, Fannie. Where does she live?"

"Oh, somewhere in Greenwich Village. But

she'll be up at the Woman's League after the meeting."

He went up to the Woman's League and found the office crowded with women and men. He asked for Miss Heffer.

"I'll take your name," said the young woman, and then came back with the answer that "he'd have to wait."

So he took a seat and waited. He felt feverish and sick, as if he could no longer carry this burden with him. It seemed impossible to sit still. And yet he waited over an hour, waited until it was eight at night, all the gas-jets lit.

The young woman came up to him.

"You want to see Miss Heffer? Come this way."

He was led up a flight of stairs to a little narrow hall-room. Sally Heffer was there at a roll-top desk, still in her little brown coat—quiet, pale, her clear eyes remarkably penetrating. She turned.

"Yes?"

He shook pitifully, . . . then he sat down, holding his hat in his hands.

"I'm Joe Blaine. . . ."

"Joe Blaine . . . of what?"

"Of the printery . . . that burned. . . ."

She looked at him sharply.

"So, you're the employer."

"Yes, I am."

"Well," she said, brusquely, "what do you want?"

"I heard you speak this afternoon." His face flickered with a smile.

"And so you . . .?"

He could say nothing; and she looked closer. She saw his gray face, his unsteady eyes, the tragedy of the broken man. Then she spoke with a lovely gentleness.

"You want to do something?"

"Yes," he murmured, "I want to give—all."

She lowered her voice, and it thrilled him.

"It won't help to give your money — you must give yourself. We don't want charity."

He said nothing for a moment; and then strength rose in him.

"I'll tell you why I came. . . . I felt I had to. . . . I felt that you were accusing me. I know I am guilty. I have come here to be"—he smiled strangely—"sentenced."

She drew closer.

"You came here for *that?*"

"Yes."

She rose and took a step either way. She gazed on him, and suddenly she broke down and cried, her hands to her face.

"O God," she sobbed, "when will all this be over? When will we get rid of this tragedy? I can't stand it longer."

He rose, too, confused.

"Listen," he whispered. "I swear to you, I swear, that from this day on my life belongs to

those"—his voice broke—"dead girls . . . to the toilers. . . ."

She impulsively reached out a hand, and he seized it. Then, when she became more quiet, she murmured:

"I can see you mean it. Oh, this is wonderful! It is a miracle springing out of the fire!"

There was a strange throbbing silence that brought them close together. And Sally, glancing at him again, whispered:

"I can see how you have suffered! Let me help you . . . all that I can!"

He spoke in great pain.

"What can I do? I know so little."

"Do? You must learn that for yourself. You must fit in where you belong. Do you know anything of the working-class movement?"

"No," he said.

"Then I will make a list of books and magazines for you."

She sat down and wrote a list on a slip, and arose and handed it to him.

She was gazing at him again, gazing at the tragic face. Then she whispered:

"I believe in you. . . . Is there anything else?"

And again she reached out her hand and he clasped it. Her fine faith smote something hard in him, shriveled it like fire, and all at once, miraculously, divinely, a little liquid gush of lovely joy, of wonderful beatitude began to rise from

his heart, to rise and overflow and fill him. He was being cleansed, he had expiated his guilt by confessing it to his accuser and receiving her strange and gentle forgiveness; tears came to his eyes, came and paused on the lashes and trickled down. He gulped a sob.

"I can go on now," he said.

She looked at him, wondering.

"You can!" she whispered.

And he went out, a free man again, at the beginning of a new life.

IV

GOLDEN OCTOBER

LIFE has an upspringing quality that defies pain. Something buoyant throbs in the heart of the world—something untamed and wild—exultant in the flying beauty of romping children, glinting in the dawn-whitened sea, risen, indeed, through man into triumphant cities and works, and running like a pulse through his spirit. San Francisco is shattered, and there is death and sorrow and destruction: a whole population is homeless—whereupon the little human creatures come down from the hills like laughing gods and create but a more splendid city. Earth itself forges through its winters with an April power that flushes a continent with delicate blossoms and tints.

Joe had come home from Sally Heffer a man renewed. From some clear well in his nature sprang a limpid stream of soft, new joy; a new exhilarating sense of life; a new creative power that made him eager for action. His heart was cleansed, and with the exquisite happiness of a forgiven child he "took up the task eternal."

Hereafter he was a man dedicated, a man consecrated to a great work.

His mother noticed the change in him, a new wisdom, a sweet jocularity, and, withal, the return of much of his old nature—its rough camaraderie, its boyish liveliness and homely simplicity. For her this was a marvelous relief, and she could only watch him and wonder at the change. He seemed very busy again, and she did not disturb him in these sensitive days of growth; she waited the inevitable time when he would come to her and tell her what he was going to do, whether he would re-establish his business or whether he had some new plan. And then one day, tidying up his room, she stumbled on a heap of books. Her heart thrilled and she began to surreptitiously borrow these books herself.

Already the great city had forgotten its fire horror—save the tiny, growing stir of an agitating committee—and even to those most nearly concerned it began to fade, a nightmare scattered by the radiance of new morning. One could only trust that from those fair and unpolluted bodies had sprung a new wave of human brotherliness never to be quite lost. And Joe's mother had had too much training in the terrible to be long overborne. She believed in her son and stood by him.

Luckily for Joe, he had much work to do. He and Marty Briggs had to settle up the business,

close with customers, dig from the burned rubbish proofs and contracts, attend the jury, and help provide for his men. One sunny morning he and Marty were working industriously in the loft, when Marty, with a cry of exultation, lifted up a little slot box.

"Holy Moses, Joe!" he exclaimed, "if here ain't the old kick-box!"

They looked in it together, very tenderly, for it was the very symbol of Joe's ten years of business. On its side there was still pasted a slip of paper, covered with typewriting:

KICK-BOX

This business is human—not perfect. It needs good thinking, new ideas (no matter how unusual), and honest criticism.

There are many things you think wrong about the printery and the printery's head—things you would not talk of face to face, as business time is precious and spoken words are sometimes hard to bear.

Now this is what I want: Sit down and write what you think in plain English. It will do me good.

JOE BLAINE.

Suddenly Marty looked at his boss.

"Say, Joe."

"What is it, Marty?"

The big fellow hesitated.

"Say—when that jury finishes—you're going to set things up again, and go on. Ain't you?"

Joe smiled sadly.

"I don't know, Marty."

Tears came to Marty's eyes.

"Say—what will the fellers say? Ah, now, you'll go ahead, Joe."

"Just give me a week or two, Marty—then I'll tell you."

But the big fellow's simple grief worked on him and made him waver, and there were other meetings with old employees that sharply drew him back to the printery. One evening, after a big day of activity, he found it too late to reach the boarding-house for supper and he remembered that John Rann's baby was sick. So he turned and hurried across the golden glamor of Third Avenue, on Eightieth Street, and just beyond climbed up three flights of stairs in a stuffy tenement and knocked on the rear door. Smells of supper—smells chiefly of cabbage, cauliflower, fried onions, and fried sausages—pervaded the hall like an invisible personality, but Joe was smell-proof.

A husky voice bade him come in and he pushed open the door into a neat kitchen. At a table in the center under a nicely globed light sat John Rann in his woolen undershirt. John was smoking a pipe and reading the evening paper, and opposite John two young girls, one about ten, the other seven, were studying their lessons.

"Hello, John!" said Joe.

John nodded amiably, and muttered:

"Hello yourself!"

He was a strong, athletic, stocky fellow, with

sunken little blue eyes, heavy jaws, and almost bald head. Before he had time to rise the two young girls leaped up with shrieks of joy and rushed to Joe. Joe at once tucked one under each arm and hugged them forward to a big chair, into which they all sank together.

"Well! Well!" cried Joe.

"Who do you love most?" asked the seven-year-old.

"The one who loves me most!" said Joe.

"I do!" they both shrieked.

"Now leave Mr. Joe be," warned the father. "Such tomboys they're getting to be, there's no holdin' 'em in!"

At once in the half-curtained doorway to the next room appeared a stocky little woman, whose pale face was made emphatic by large steel-rimmed glasses that shrank each eye-pupil to the size of a tack-head. Her worried forehead smoothed; she smiled.

"I knew it was Mr. Joe," she said, "by the way those gals yelled."

Joe spoke eagerly:

"I just had to run in, Mrs. Rann, to ask how the baby was."

"He's a sight better. Mrs. Smith, who lives third floor front, had one just like him sick a year ago come Thanksgiving, and he died like that. But the doctor you sent over is that kind and cute he's got the little fellow a-fightin' for his life. He's a *big* sight better. Want to see him?'

Joe gave a kiss each way, set down two reluctant women-to-be, and followed Mrs. Rann to the inner room. In a little crib a youngster, just recovered from colic, was kicking up his heels. Joe leaned over and tickled the sole of one foot.

"Well, Johnny boy!"

"Unc! Unc!" cried the infant.

The mother purred with delight.

"He's trying to say Uncle Joe. Did you ever hear the likes?"

Joe beamed with pride.

"Well, your uncle hasn't forgotten you, old man!"

And he produced from his pocket a little rubber doll that whistled whenever its belly was squeezed.

John Rann appeared behind them.

"Say, Mr. Joe, *you* haven't had your supper yet."

"Not hungry!" muttered Joe.

"G'wan! Molly, put him up a couple of fried eggs, browned on both, and a cup of coffee. I won't take no, either."

Joe laughed.

"Well, perhaps I'd better. I'm ashamed to ask for anything home this hour—in fact, I'm scared to."

So he got his fried eggs and coffee, and the family hung around him, and Joe, circled with such warm friendliness, was glad to be alive.

He was especially pleased with Mrs. Rann's regard. But Joe was always a favorite with mothers. Possibly because he was so fond of their babies. Possibly because mothers love a good son, wherever they find one. Possibly because his heart was large enough to contain as something precious their obscure lives.

Just before he left John asked him:

"Will the printery soon be running, Mr. Joe?"

"Tell you later," murmured Joe, and went out. But he was sorely troubled.

However, to Joe there had been revealed—almost in a day and after thirty-eight years of insulated life—two of the supreme human facts. There was humanity, on the one side, building the future, the new state, organizing its scattered millions into a rich, healthy, joyous life and calling to every man to enlist in the ranks of the creators; and then there was woman, the undying splendor of the world, the beauty that drenches life with meaning and magic, that stirs the elemental in a man, that wakens the race instinct, that demands the creation of new generations to inhabit that new state of the future. Intertwined, these wondrous things drew the heart now this way, now that, and to Joe they arose separately in intermittent pulsations that threatened to absorb his existence.

He did not dare go to Myra until he was sure of himself. It seemed that he would have to choose between woman and work. It seemed

as if his work would lead into peril, dirt, disaster, and that he could not ask a delicate, high-strung woman to go with him. The woman could not follow her warrior to the battle, for marriage meant children to Joe, and the little ones must stay back at home with the mother.

In that moment of clear terror he had said to Myra:

"I may never see you again. . . . I belong to those dead girls."

And this phrase came and went like a refrain. He must choose between her and those "dead girls." There stood Myra with gray luminous eyes and soft echoing voice magically hinting of a life of ever-renewed romance. She had a breast for his aching head, she had in her hands a thousand darling household things, she had in her the possibilities of his own children . . . who should bring a wind of laughter into his days and a strange domestic tenderness. The depths of the man were stirred by these appeals—that was the happy human way to take, the common road fringed with wild flowers and brier-lost berries, and glorious with the stride of health and the fresh open air.

And Myra herself, that charming presence to infold his life— He would go walking through the golden October park, by little leaf-strewn paths under the wild and sun-soaked foliage, with many vistas every way of luring mystery, and over all the earth the rich opulent mother-

bliss of harvest, and his heart would ache, ache within him, ache for his own harvests, ache like the sun for the earth, the man for the woman.

A mad frenzy would seize him and he would plunge into his books and read and think and lash himself to a fury of speculation till the early hours of the morning. Exhaustion alone brought him peace.

But something had to be done. He sat down and wrote to her with a trembling hand:

DEAR MYRA,—Though I am impatient to see you, I must yet wait a little while. Bear with me. You will understand later. Yours, JOE.

And when she replied:

DEAR JOE,—Can't I help you?

MYRA.

He had to fight a whole afternoon before he replied:

Not yet—later. JOE.

And back he went into the whirlwind of the world-vision, a stupendous force upsetting, uprooting, overturning, demolishing, almost erasing and contradicting everything that Joe had taken for granted, and in the wake of the destruction, rising and ever rising, a new creation, the vision of a new world.

He had taken so much for granted. He had taken for granted that he lived in a democracy—

that the Civil War had once for all made America a free nation—a nation of opportunity, riches, and happiness for all. Not so. Literally millions were living in abject poverty, slaves to their pay-envelopes; to lose a job meant to lose everything, there being more laborers than jobs, or if not, at least recurrent "panics" and "hard times" when the mills and the mines shut down. And these wage slaves had practically no voice in one of the chief things of their life—their work. So millions were penned in places of danger and disease and dirt, lived and toiled in squalor, and were cut off from growth, from health, from leisure and culture and recreation; and worse, millions of women had to add the burden of earning a living to the already overwhelming burden of child-bearing and home-making; and, still worse, millions of children had been drafted into the service of industrialism.

He proved the case for himself. He began making tours of the city, discovering New York, laying bare the confusion and ugliness and grime and crime and poverty of a great industrial center. He poked into the Ghetto, into Chinatown, Greenwich Village, and Little Italy; he peered into jails, asylums, and workhouses; he sneaked through factories and hung about saloons. Everywhere a terrific struggle, many sinking down into the city's underworld of crime, men becoming vagrants or thieves, women walking the streets as prostitutes.

And over this broad foundation of the "people" rose the structure of business and politics, equally corrupted—or so it seemed to Joe, as it does to every one who is fresh to the facts. Men at the top gathering into their hands the necessities of life: oil, meat, coal, water-power, wool; seizing on the railroads, those only modern means of social exchange; snatching strings of banks wherein the people's money was being saved; and using their mighty money-power to corrupt legislation, to thwart the will of the voters, to secure new powers, to crush opposition. So had arisen a "Money Power" that was annuling democracy.

And Joe's books argued that all this change had been wrought by the invention of machinery, that only through steam, steel, and electricity could world-wide organization take place, that only through these arose the industrial city, the modern mill. The very things that should have set man free, the enormous powers he snatched from nature and harnessed to do his work, powers with the strength of a nation of men—these very things had been seized by a few for their own profit, and had enslaved the majority. Over and over again could the race be fed, clothed, housed, and enriched by these powers, and that with lessened hours of toil and more variety of work.

But Joe's books argued further and most dogmatically that this organization by the selfish

few was a necessary step in progress, that when their work was finished the toilers, the millions, would arise and seize the organization and use it thereafter for the good of all. Indeed, this was what Sally's labor movement meant: the enlightenment of the toilers as to the meaning of industrialism, and their training for the supreme revolution.

And out of all this arose the world-vision. At such moments Joe walked in a rarer air, he stepped on a fairer earth than ordinarily obtains. It was the beauty and loveliness of simple human camaraderie, of warm human touch. And at such times Joe had no doubt of his life-work. It lay in exquisite places, in chambers of jolly grandeur, in the invisible halls and palaces of the human spirit. He was one with the toilers of earth, one with the crowded underworld. It was that these lives might grow richer in knowledge, richer in art, richer in health, richer in festival, richer in opportunity, that Joe had dedicated his life. And so arose that wonderful and inexpressible vision—a picture as it were of the far future—a glimpse of an earth singing with uplifted crowds of humanity, on one half of the globe going out to meet the sunrise, on the other, the stars. He heard the music of that Hymn of Human Victory, which from millions of throats lifts on that day when all the race is woven into a harmony of labor and joy and home and great unselfish deeds. That day, possibly, might

COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIA
LIBRARY

never arrive, forever fading farther and farther into the sunlit distances—but it is the day which leads the race forward. To Joe, however, came that vision, and when it came it seemed as if the last drop of his blood would be little to offer, even in anguish, to help, even by ever so little, the coming and the consummation of that Victory.

He would awake in the night, and cry out in a fever:

"By God, I'm going to help change things."

The vision shook him—tugged at his heart, downward, like the clutch of a convulsive child; seized him now and again like a madness. Even unto such things had the "dead girls" brought him.

So, crammed with theories—theories as yet untested by experience—Joe became an iconoclast lusting for change. He was bursting with good news, he wanted to cry the intimations from the housetops, he wanted to proselytize, convert. He was filled with Shelley's passion for reforming the world, and like young Shelley, he felt that all he had to do was to show the people the truth and the truth would make them free.

All this was in his great moments, . . . there were reactions when his human humorous self—backed by ten years of the printery—told him that the world is a complex mix-up, and that there are many visions; moments that made him wonder what he was about, and why so un-

trained a man expected to achieve such marvels.

But these reactions were swallowed up by the recurrent pulsations, the spasms of his vision. He felt from day to day a growth of purpose, an accumulation of energy that would resistlessly spill into action, that would bear him along, whether or no. But what should he do, and how? He was unfitted, and did not think he cared, for settlement work. He knew nothing and cared less for charity work. Politics were an undiscovered world to him. What he wanted passionately was to go and live among the toilers, get to know them, and be the means of arousing and training them.

But then there was the problem of his mother —a woman of sixty-three. Could he leave her alone? It was preposterous to think of taking her with him. Myra could a thousand times better go. He must talk with his mother, he must thresh the matter out with her, he must not delay longer to clear the issue. And yet he hesitated. Would she be able to understand? How could he communicate what was bursting in his breast? She belonged to a past generation; how could she hear the far-off drums of the advance?

Up and down the Park he went early one evening in a chaos of excitement, and he had a sudden conviction that he could not put off the moment any longer. He must go to his mother

at once, he must tell all. As he walked down the lamp-lit street, under all the starriness of a tranquil autumn night, he became alternately pale and flushed, his heart thumped hard against his ribs, he felt like a little boy going to his mother to confess a wrong.

He looked up; the shades of the second floor were illumined: she was up there. Doing what? Sharply then he realized what a partial life she led, the decayed middle-class associates of the boarding-house, tired, brainless, and full of small talk, the lonesome evenings, the long days. He became more agitated, and climbed the stoop, unlocked his way into the house, went up the dim, soft, red-cushioned stairs, past the milky gas-globe in the narrow hall, and knocked at her door.

"Come in!" she cried.

He swung the door wide and entered. She was, as usual, sitting in the little rocker under the light and beside the bureau, between the bed and the window. The neat, fragrant room seemed to be sleeping, but the clear-eyed, upright woman was very much awake. She glanced up from her sewing and realized intuitively that at last the crisis had come. His big, homely face was a bald advertisement of his boyish excitement.

She nodded, and murmured, "Well!"

He drew up a chair awkwardly, and sat opposite her, tilting back to accommodate his sprawling length. Then he was at a loss.

"Well," he muttered, trying to be careless, "how are you?"

"All right," she said drily.

She could not help him, though her heart was beginning to pain in her side.

"I've been walking about the Park," he began again, with an indifference that was full of leaks, "and thinking. . . ." He leaned forward and spoke suddenly: "Say, mother, don't you get tired of living in this place?"

She felt strangely excited, but answered guardedly.

"It isn't so bad, Joe. . . . There are a few decent people . . . there's Miss Gardiner, the librarian . . . and I have books and sewing."

"Oh, I know," he went on, clumsily, "but you're alone a lot."

"Yes, I am," she said, and all at once she felt that she could speak no further with him. She began sewing diligently.

"Say, mother!"

No answer.

"Mother!"

"Yes," dimly.

His voice sounded unnatural.

"Since the . . . fire . . . I've been doing some thinking, some reading. . . ."

"Yes."

"I've been going about . . . studying the city. . . ."

"Yes."

"Now I want you to understand, mother. . . . I want to tell you of . . . It's—well, I want to do something with my money, my life. . . ." And his voice broke, in spite of himself.

His mother felt as if she were smothering. But she waited, and he went on:

"For those dead girls, mother . . . " and sharply came a dry sob. "And for all the toilers. Oh, but can you understand?"

There was a silence. Then she looked at him from her youthful, brilliant eyes, and saw only an overgrown, rather ignorant boy. This gave her strength, and, though it was painful, she began speaking:

"*Understand?* Do you mean the books you are reading?"

"Yes," he murmured.

"Well," she smiled weakly, "I've been reading them, too."

"*You!*" He was shocked. He looked at her as if she had revealed a new woman to him.

"Yes," she said, quickly. "I found them in your room."

He was amazedly silent. He felt then that he had never really known his mother.

"Joe," she said, tremulously, "I want to tell you a little about the war. . . . There are things I haven't told you."

And while he sat, stupefied and dumfounded, she told him—not all, but many things. She was back in the Boston of the sixties, when she

was a young girl, when that town was the literary center of America, when high literature was in the air, when the poets had great fame and every one, even the business man, was a poet. She had seen or met some of the great men. Once Whittier was pointed out to her, at a time when his lines on slavery were burning in her brain. She had seen the clear-eyed Lowell walking under the elms of Cambridge, and she justly felt that she was one of those

> "Who dare to be
> In the right with two or three."

Once, even, a relative of hers, a writer then well known and now forgotten, had taken her out to see "the white Mr. Longfellow." It was one of the dream-days of her life—the large, spacious, square Colonial house where once Washington had lived; the poet's square room with its round table and its high standing desk in which he sometimes wrote; the sloping lawn; the great trees; and, better than anything, the simple, white-haired, white-bearded poet who took her hand so warmly and spoke so winningly and simply. He even gave her a scrap of paper on which were written some of his anti-slavery lines.

Those were great days—days when America, the world's experiment in democracy, was thrown into those fires that consume or purify. The great test was on, whether such a nation could live, and Boston was athrob with love of

country and eagerness to sacrifice. The young, beautiful, clear-eyed girl did not hesitate a moment to urge Henry Blaine to give up all and go to the front. It was like tearing her own heart in two, and, possibly at a word, Blaine would have remained in Boston and helped in some other way. But she fought it out with him one night on Boston Commons, and she wished then that she was a man and could go herself. On that clear, mild night, the blue luminous tinge of whose moon she remembered so vividly, they walked up and down, they passionately embraced, they felt the end of life and the mystery of death, and then at last when the young man said: "I'll go! It's little enough to do in this crisis!" she clung to him with pride and sacred joy and knew that life was very great and that it had endless possibilities.

And so Henry Blaine went with his regiment, and the black and terrible years set in—years in which so often she saw what Walt Whitman had seen:

"I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierced with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs (and all in silence),
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.
I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,

And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them.
I saw the débris and débris of all the slain soldiers
of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought.
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffered not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suf-
fer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade
suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd."

Terrible years, years of bulletins, years of want, hard times, years when all the future was at stake, until finally that day in New York when she saw the remnant returning, marching up Broadway between the black crowds and the bunting, the drums beating, the fifes playing,

"Returning, with thinned ranks, young, yet very old,
worn, marching, noticing nothing."

Henry Blaine was one of these and he came to her a cripple, an emaciated and sick man. Then had followed, as Joe knew, the marriage, the hard pioneer life in the shanty on the stony hill, the death, and the long widowhood . . .

Had she not a right to speak to him?

"Understand?" she ended. "I think, Joe, I ought to understand. . . . I sent your father into the war. . . ."

Depth beneath depth he was discovering her. He was amazed and awed. He asked himself where he had been all these years, and how he

had been so blind. He felt very young then. It was she who actually knew what the word social and the word patriotism meant.

He looked down on the floor, and spoke in a whisper:

"And . . . would you send me off, too? The new war?"

She could scarcely speak.

"Where to?"

"I . . . oh, I'll have to go down in a tenement somewhere—the slums. . . ."

"Well, then," she said, quietly, "I'll go with you."

"But you—" he exclaimed, almost adding, "an old woman"—"it's impossible, mother."

She answered him with the same quietness.

"You forget the shanty."

And then it was clear to him. Like an electric bolt it shot him, thrilling, stirring his heart and soul. She *would* go with him; more than that, she *should*. It was her right, won by years of actual want and struggle and service. More, it was her escape from a flat, stale, meaningless boarding-house existence. Suddenly he felt that she was really his mother, knit to him by ties unbreakable, a terrible thing in its miraculousness.

But he only said, in a strained voice,

"All right, mother!"

And she laughed, and mused, and murmured:

"How does the world manage to keep so new and young?"

V

MYRA AND JOE

MYRA CRAIG used to dream at night that the fifty-seven members of her class arose from their desks with wild shrieks and danced a war-dance about her. This paralyzed her throat, her hands, and her feet, and she could only stand, flooded with horror, awaiting the arrival of the school principal and disgrace. Out of this teacher's dream she always awoke disgusted with school-work.

Myra came from Fall River—her parents still lived there—came when she was ten years younger, to seek her fortune in the great city. New York had drawn her as it draws all the youth of the land, for youth lusts for life and rushes eagerly to the spot where life is most intense and most exciting. The romance of crowds, of wealth, of art, of concentrated pleasure and concentrated vice, of immense money-power, the very architecture of the world-city, the maelstrom of people, drew the young Fall River woman irresistibly. She did not want the even and smooth future of a little town; she wanted to plunge into the hazardous inter-

weaving of the destinies of millions of people. She wanted to grasp at some of the magic opportunities of the city. She wanted a career.

And so she came. Early that June morning she left her cabin on the Sound steamboat and went out on deck, and then she had unfolded to her the most thrilling scene of the earth. Gazing, almost panting with excitement, it seemed to her that the nature she had known—the hills and fields of New England—shrank to littleness. First there was all about her the sway of the East River, golden-flecked with the morning sun, which glowed through a thin haze. From either shore a city climbed, topped with steeples and mill chimneys—floods of tenements and homes. Then the boat swept under the enormous steel bridges which seemed upheld by some invisible power and throbbed with life above them. And then, finally, came the Vision of the City. The wide expanse of rolling, slapping water was busy with innumerable harbor craft, crowded ferries, puffing tugs, each wafting its plume of smoke and white steam; but from those waters rose tier after tier of square-set skyscrapers climbing in an irregular hill to the thin peak of the highest tower. In the golden haze, shot with sun, the whole block of towers loomed distant, gigantic, shadowy, unreal—a magic city floating on the waters of the morning. Windows flashed, spirals of white smoke spun thin from the far roofs. Myra thought of those skyscrapers as the big

brothers of the island gazing out over the Atlantic.

The boat rounded the tip of the island, furrowing the broad surface of the bay, which seemed as the floor of a stage before that lifting huge sky-lost amphitheater. Every advance changed the many-faceted beauty of New York, and Myra, gazing, had one glimpse across little green Battery Park up the deep twilit cañon of Broadway, the city's spine. The young woman was moved to tears. She seemed to slough off at that moment the church of her youth, averring that New York was too big for a creed. It was the great human outworking; the organism of the mighty many. It seemed a miracle that all this splendor and wonder had been wrought by human hands. Surely human nature was great —greater than she had dreamed. If creatures like herself had wrought this, then she was more than she had dared to imagine, "deeper than ever plummet had sounded." She felt new courage, new faith. She wanted to leave the boat and merge with those buildings and those swarming streets. She was proud of the great captains who had engineered this masswork, proud of the powers that ruled this immensity.

But beyond all she felt the city's *livingness*. The air seemed charged with human activity, with toil-pulsations. She was all crowded about with human beings, and felt the mystery of what might be termed *crowd-touch*. Here,

surely, was life—life thick, happy, busy, daring, ideal. Here was pioneering—a reaching forth to a throbbing future. So, as the boat landed, she mentally identified herself with this city, labeled herself New-Yorker, and became one of its millions.

Her rapture lasted throughout her first stay. She tasted romance glancing in shop windows or moving in a crowd or riding in an elevated train. A letter of introduction to a friend of her mother's secured her a companion, who "showed her the sights" and helped her choose her boarding-house in East Eightieth Street. And then came the examinations for public-school teaching; and after these she went home for the summer, returning to New York in the fall.

Then her new life began, the rapture ceased, and Myra Craig, like so many others, found that her existence in the city was just as narrow as it had been in the town. In some ways, more narrow. She was quite without friends, quite without neighborhood. Her day consisted in teaching from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M., correcting papers and planning lessons and making reports until well into the evening, sometimes until late in the night, and meeting at meals unfriendly people that she disliked. Her class was composed of rather stupid, rather dirty children. They *smelled* —a thing she never forgave them. And what could one woman do with fifty or sixty children? The class was at least three times too big for real

teaching, and so almost inevitably a large part of the work became routine—a grind that spoiled her temper and embittered her heart. Her fellow-teachers were an ignorant lot; the principal himself she thought the biggest lump of stupidity she had ever met—a man demanding letter-perfection and caring not one rap for the growth of children. Her week-ends were her only relief, and she used these partly for resting and partly in going to theater and concert.

Such for ten years—with summers spent at home—was Myra's life. It was bounded by a few familiar streets; it was largely routine; it was hard and bitter; and it had no future. It was anything but what she had dreamed. New York was anything but what she had dreamed. She never saw again that Vision of the City; never felt again that throb of life, that sense of pioneering and of human power. And yet in those years Myra had developed. She was thrown back on books for friendship, and through these and through hard work and through very routine she developed personality—grew sensitive, mentally quick, metropolitan. She had, as it were, her own personal *flavor*—one felt in her presence a difference, a uniqueness quite precious and exquisite.

And then one day she had gone to the printery and met a man, who was homely, rough, simple, and, in spite of her revulsion from these qualities, was immensely drawn to him. Something deeper

than the veneer of her culture overpowered her. She had almost forgotten sex in the aridity of those ten years; she had almost become a dried old maid; but now by the new color in her cheeks, the sparkle in her eyes, the fresh rapidity of her blood, and through the wonder of the world having become more *light*, as if there were two suns in the sky instead of one—yes, through the fact that she lived now at ten human-power instead of one—her heart told her exultingly, "You are a *woman*."

Girlhood had come again, but girlhood made all woman by immense tenderness, by the uprush of a wild love, and by the awakening of all her instincts of home and mating and childbearing. And then had come that mad, windblown twilight at the riverside when the spirit of life had drenched her and she had become grave, tender, and wrought of all lovely power. Joe was just a boy then to her, and her great womanheart drew him in and sheltered him in the sacred warmth of her being. In that moment she had reached the highest point of her womanhood, a new unfolding, a new release. And then had come horror, and he had been swept away from her—one glimpse of his numb, ghastly face, and he was gone.

It was Fannie Lemick that took her home. She only knew that she was being led away, while crashing through her mind went flames, smoke, the throbbing of the engines, and the words:

"I may never see you again . . . dead girls. . . ." All that night she tossed about in a horror, and in the morning she feverishly read the terrible news until she thought she must swoon away. She became sick; the landlady had to come up and help her; the doctor had to be sent for, and he had told her that this nervous breakdown had been long overdue; she had been working under too great a strain; it only needed some shock to break her.

But while she lay in a sick fever her heart went out to Joe. If she only could be at his side, nerve him to the fight, protect him and soothe him. She knew that his whole old life had been consumed in that fire, and lay in ruins, and she felt subtly that he had been taken from her. By one blow, at the very moment of the miracle of their love, they had been torn from each other. She did not want to live; she hoped that she had some serious disease that would kill her.

But she did live; she became better, and then in a mood of passionate tenderness she wrote her first little love-letter to Joe. She went about, doing her school-work and bearing the weight of intolerable lonely days, and he had written twice, just a word to her, a word of delay. What kept him? What was he doing? She read of his testimony at the inquest and became indignant because he blamed himself. Who was to blame for such an accident? It was not his cigarette that had started the blaze. In her overwrought

condition she passed from a terrible love to a sharp hate, and back and forth. Was he a fool or was he more noble than she could fathom? He should have seen her sooner, he should not have left her a prey to her morbid thoughts. Time and again she became convinced that he had ceased to love her, that he was more concerned over his burnt printery. She twisted his letters against him. She would sit in her room trying to work at her school papers, and suddenly she would clench her fists, turn pale, and stare despairingly at the blank wall.

Day after day she waited, starting up every time she heard the postman's whistle and the ringing of the bell. And then at last one night, as she paced up and down the narrow white little room, she heard the landlady climbing the stairs, advancing along the hall, and there was a sharp rap. She felt faint and dizzy, flung open the door, took the letter, and sank down on the bed, hardly daring to open it.

It was brief and cold:

DEAR MYRA,—I know you are up early, so I am coming around at seven to-morrow morning—I'll be out in the street and wait for you. We can go to the Park. I have some serious problems to lay before you.

JOE.

"Serious problems!" She understood. He was paving the way for renouncing her. Perhaps it was a money matter—he thought he ought not marry on a reduced income. Or perhaps he

found he didn't love her. For hours she sat there with the letter crumpled in her hand, frozen, inert, until she was incapable of feeling or thinking. So he was coming at seven. He took it for granted that she would be ready to see him—would be eager to walk in the Park with him. Well, what if she didn't go? A fine letter that, after that half-hour at the riverside. A love-letter! She laughed bitterly. And then her heart seemed to break within her. Life was too hard. Why had she ever left the peace and quiet of Fall River? Why had she come down to the cruel, careless, vicious city to be ground up in a wholesale school system and then to break her heart for an uncouth, half-educated printer? It was all too hard, too cruel. Why had she been born to suffer so? Why must she tingle now with pain, when in a few years she would be unfeeling dust again? Among all the millions of the people of the earth, among all the life of earth and the circling million scattered worlds, she felt utterly isolated, defrauded, betrayed. Life was a terrible gift, and she did not want it. This whirl of emotion rose and rose in her, went insanely through her brain, and, becoming intolerable, suddenly ceased and left her careless, numb, and hard.

She arose mechanically and looked in the glass at herself. Her face was haggard.

"I'm getting homely," she thought, and quietly went to bed.

But in the night she awoke to a swift frenzy of joy. He was coming. After all, he was coming. She would see him. She would be near him again. Yes, how she loved him! loved with all her nature. It was the intensity of her love that made her hate. And she lay throbbing with joy, her whole being quivering with desire for him. He was hers, after all. It was the woman's part to forgive and forget.

But when the morning broke, and she arose in her nightgown and sat on the chair at the window, smoothing out and rereading the letter, her doubts returned. He was coming to renounce her. He would make all sorts of plausible excuses, he would be remorseful and penitent, but it all came to the same end. Why should she go and meet him to be humiliated in this way? She would not go.

Yet she rose and dressed with unusual care and tried to smile back the radiance of her face, and fixed her hair this way and that in a pitiful attempt to take away the sharpness of her expression, and when her little clock showed seven she put on hat and coat with trembling hands and went swiftly down and out at the front door. She was shaking with terrible emotions, fire filled and raged in her breast, and she had to bite her lip to keep it still.

The city flashed before her in all the sparkle of October, the air tingled, and in the early morning light the houses, the street, looked as bright and

fresh as young school-children washed, combed, bright-eyed, new with sleep, and up from roofs went magic veilings of flimsy smoke. Down the avenues clanged cars black with mechanics, clerks, and shop-girls on the way to work; people streamed hurrying to their day's toil. The city was awake, shaking in every part of her with glad breakfast and the rush to activity. What colossal forces swinging in, swinging out of the metropolis in long pulsations of freight and ship and electricity! Wall Street would roar, the skyscrapers swarm, the schools drone and murmur and sing, the mills grind and rattle, and the six continents and the seven seas would pulse their blood into the city and be flushed by her radiating tides. Into this hidden activity Myra stepped, deaf and blind to all but the clamor of her heart and a single man walking like a black pawn aureoled in the low early sunlight.

She came down slowly, as he came up. She glanced at his face. She was shocked by its suffering, its gray age. He looked quite shabby in his long frayed coat, his unpolished shoes, his gray slouch hat—shabby and homely, and ill-proportioned, stooping a little, his rough shock of hair framing the furrowed face and sunken melancholy eyes. And it was for this man that she had been breaking her heart! Yet, at the moment there swept over her an awful surge of passion, so strong that she could have seized him in her arms and died in his embrace.

He, in turn, saw how white and set her face was, how condemnatory. He had come to her almost ready to throw his plans overboard and cleave to her—for a day and a night that side of his nature had dominated, expunging all else, driving him to her, demanding that he grasp her magic presence, her womanly splendor. This alone was real, and all the rest fantastic. And he had walked up and down the street with all the October morning singing in his blood; the world was glorious again and he was young; he would take her, he would forget all else, and they would go off somewhere in the wilderness and really live. He had never lived yet. He thirsted for life, he thirsted for all this woman could give him. And now the condemnation in her face choked him off, made her a stranger, separated them, made it hard to speak to her.

He cried in a low voice:

"Myra!"

The word was charged with genuine passion, and she became more pale, and stood unable to find her tongue, her lips quivering painfully.

Then suddenly there was a nervous overflow.

"You wanted to walk in the Park," she blurted in a cold, uneven voice. "We'd better be going then. I won't have much time. I've got to be at school early."

She started off, and he strode beside her. They walked in a strange slow silence, each charged with inexpressible, conflicting emotions,

and each waiting for the other. This strain was impossible, and finally Joe began speaking in low tones.

"I know it seems queer that I haven't been to see you . . . but you'll understand, I couldn't. There was so much to do. . . ."

He stopped, and then again came the cold, uneven voice:

"You could have found a moment."

They went on in silence, and entered the Park, following the walk where it swept its curve alongside the tree-arched roadway, past low green hills to the right and the sinking lawns to the left, crossed the roadway, and climbed the steep path that gave on to the Ramble—that twisty little wilderness in the heart of the city, that remote, wild, magic tangle.

A little pond lay in the very center of it, all deep with the blue sky, and golden October gloried all about it—swaying in wild-tinted treetops, blowing in dry leaves, sparkling on every spot of wet, and all suffused and splashed and strangely fresh with the low, red, radiant sunlight. There was splendor in the place, and the air dripped with glorious life, and through it all went the lovers, silent, estranged, pitiable.

"We can sit here," said Joe.

It was a bench under a tree, facing the pond. They sat down, each gazing on the ground, and the leaves dropped on them, and squirrels ran up to them, tufted their tails and begged for peanuts

with lustrous beady eyes, and now and then some early walker or some girl or man on the way to work swung lustily past and disappeared in foliage and far low vistas of tree trunks.

The suspense became intolerable again. Joe turned a little to her.

"Myra!"

She was trembling; a moment more she would be in his arms, sobbing, forgiving him. But she hurried on in an unnatural way.

"You wanted to speak to me—I'm waiting. *Why* don't you speak?"

It was a blow in the face; his own voice hardened then.

"You're making it very hard for me."

She said nothing, and he had to go on.

"After the fire—" his voice snapped, and it was a space before he went on, "I felt I was guilty. . . . I went to a mass-meeting and one of the speakers accused the . . . class I belong to . . . of failing in their duty. . . . She said . . ."

Myra spoke sharply:

"Who said?"

"Miss Heffer."

"Oh!"

Joe felt suddenly silenced. Something unpleasant was creeping in between them. He did not know enough of women, either, to divine how Myra was suffering, to know that she had reached a nervous pitch where she was hardly responsible

for what she thought and said. He went on blunderingly:

"I felt that I was accused. . . . I felt that I had to make reparation to the toilers, . . . had to spend my life making conditions better. . . . You see this country has reached a crisis . . ."

It was all gibberish to her.

"Exactly what do you mean?" she asked, sharply.

"I mean "—he fumbled for words—"I must go and live among the poor and arouse them and teach them of the great change that is taking place. . . . "

She laughed strangely.

"Oh—an uplifter, settlement work, charity work—"

He was stupefied.

"Myra, can't you see—"

"Yes, I see," she said, raising her voice a little; "you're going to live in the slums and you want me to release you. I do. Anything else?"

She was making something sordid of his beautiful dream, and she was startlingly direct. He was cut to the heart.

"You're making it impossible," he began.

She laughed a little, stroking down her muff.

"So you're going to live among the poor . . . and you didn't dare come and tell me. . . ."

"I had no right to involve you until I was sure. . . ."

"And now you're sure. . . ."

"No," he cried.

She raised her voice a little again:

"And I wrote asking if I couldn't help you. Women are fools. . . ."

He sat searching about for something to say. His heart was like cold lead in his breast; his head ached. He felt her side of the case very vividly, and how could she ever understand?

Then, as she sat there her head seemed to explode, and she spoke hurriedly, incoherently:

"It's time to get to school. I want to go alone. Good-by."

She rose and went off rapidly.

"Myra!" he cried, leaping up, but she only accelerated her pace. . . .

Instead of going to school she went straight home, flung herself full-length on the bed, buried her face in the pillow, and shook for a long time with terrible tearless sobs. Her life was ruined within her.

VI

MARTY BRIGGS

JOE went home in a distraught condition. He was angry, amazed, and passion-shaken. He had had a look into that strange mixture which is woman—and he was repelled, and yet attracted as he had never been before. He felt that all was over between them, that somehow she had convicted him of being brutal, selfish, and unmanly, and in the light of her condemnation he saw in his delay to meet her only cowardice and harsh indifference. And yet all along he had acted on the conclusion that he had no right to ask a woman to go into the danger of his work with him.

Pacing up and down his narrow room, he began lashing himself again, excusing, forgiving Myra everything. He had never really understood her nature; he should have gone to her in the beginning and trusted to her love and her insight; he should have let her share the aftermath of the fire; that fierce experience would have taught her that he was forever mortgaged to a life of noble reparation, and even the terror of it

all would have been better than shutting her out, to brood morbidly alone.

Yet, what could he do? He must be strong, be wise, keep his head. He had pledged himself, sworn himself into the service of the working-class movement. There was no escape. He tried to bury himself in his books, regain for a moment his splendid dream of the future state, feel again those strange throes of world-building, of social service.

And out of it all grew a letter, a letter to Myra. He wrote it in a strange haste, the sentences coming too rapidly for his pen. It ran:

DEAR MYRA,—I must *make* you understand! I hurt you when I wanted to help you; I wronged you when I wanted only to do right by you. Why didn't you listen to me this morning?

It was at the fire there, at that moment you tugged at my sleeve and I spoke to you, that I saw clearly that my life was no longer my own, that I could not even give it to you, whom I loved, whom I love now with every bit of my existence. I told you I belonged to those dead girls. Have you forgotten? *Sixty of them* —and three of my men. It was as if I had killed them myself. I am a guilty man, and I must expiate this guilt. There is no use fooling myself with pleasant phrases, no use thinking others to blame. It was I who was responsible.

And through the death of those girls I learned of the misery of the world, of the millions in want, the women wrenched from their homes to toil in the mills, the little children—fresh, sweet bodies, bubbling hearts, and tender, whimsical minds—slaving in factories, tiny boys and girls laboring like men and women in

cotton and knitting mills, in glass factory and coal-mine, and on the streets of cities, upon whose frail little spirits is thrust the responsibility, the wage burden, the money, and family trouble, the care and drudgery and mortal burden we grown people ourselves not seldom find too hard. I have learned of a world gone wrong; I have learned of a new slavery on earth; and I as a member of the master class share the general guilt for the suffering of the poor. . . . I must help to free them from the very conditions that killed the sixty girls. . . .

And when I think of those girls and their families (some of them were the sole support of their mothers and sisters and brothers) the least I can do is to render up my life for the lives that were lost—the least I can do is to fill myself with the spirit of the dead and go forth, not to avenge them, but to help build a world where the living will not be sacrificed as they were.

This country is facing a great crisis; civilization is facing a great crisis. Shall we go forward or be drawn backward? There is a call to arms and every man must offer his life in the great fight—that fight for democracy, that fight for lifting up the millions to new levels of life, that fight for a better earth and a superber race of human beings; and in that fight I am with the pioneers, heart and soul; I am ringing with the joy and struggle of it; I am for it, with all my strength and all my power. It demands everything; its old cry, "Arise, arise, and follow me!" means giving up possessions, giving away all, making every sacrifice. Before this issue our little lives shrink into nothingness, and we must sink our happiness into the future of the world.

How can I ask you to go into the peril, the dirt, and disease of this struggle? And how can I refrain from going in myself? Let me see you once more. Do not

deny me that. And understand that through life my love will follow you . . . a love greatened, I trust, by what little I do in the great cause. . . .

Ever yours,

Joe.

He waited for an answer and none came, and he felt during those days that the life was being dragged out of him. Feverishly then he buried himself in his tasks and his books, he went on cramming himself with theories until he reached the bursting-point and wanted to go out on fire with mission, almost a fanatic, an Isaiah to shake the city with invective and prophesy change. What could he do to spread the tidings, the news? The time had come to find an outlet for the overbearing flood within him. And then one evening in the Park like a flash came the plan. He must go among the poor, he must get to know them—not in this neighborhood, "a prophet is not without honor, etc."—but in some new place where he was unknown. He thought of Greenwich Village. Did not Fannie Lemick tell him that Sally Heffer lived in Greenwich Village? Well, he would look into the matter. He was a printer; why not then print a little weekly newspaper directly for the toilers, for his neighbors? He could tell all that way, pour out his enlightenment, stir them, stand by them, take part in their activities, their troubles and their strikes and lead them forth to a new life. He was sure they were ripe for the facts, powder awaiting the spark; he would go down among them and

make his paper the center of their disorganized life.

The more he thought of the plan the more it thrilled him. What was greater than the power of the press? What more direct? He was done with palliatives, finding men jobs, giving Christmas turkeys, paying for coal. What the people needed was education so that they could get justice—all else would follow.

But even at that perfervid period of his life Joe was saved from being a John Brown by his sense of humor. This was the imp in him that always poked a little doubt into his heart and laughed at his ignorance and innocence. By next morning Joe was smiling at himself. Nevertheless, he was driven ahead.

He called for Marty Briggs and they went to lunch together. Third Avenue lay naked to the rain, which swept forward in silvery gusts, dripping, dripping from the elevated structure, and the pattering liquid sound had a fresh mellow music. Here and there a man or woman, mushroomed by an umbrella, dashed quickly for a car, and the trolleys, gray and crowded, seemed to duck hurriedly under the downpour. The faces of Joe and Marty were fresh-washed and spattering drops; they laughed together as they walked.

"I've some business to talk over with you," explained Joe, and they finally went into a little restaurant on Third Avenue. The stuffy little place, warm and damp with the excluded rain,

and odorous with sizzling lard and steaming coffee and boiling cabbage, was crowded with people, but Joe and Marty took a little table to themselves in the darkest corner. They sat against the dirty rear wall, whose white paint was finger-marked, fly-specked, and food-spotted, and in which a shelf-aperture furnished the connection with the kitchen. To this hole in the wall hurried the three waitresses, shrieking their orders above the din of many voices and the clatter and clash of plates and utensils.

"One ham—and!"

A monstrous greasy cook peered forth, shoving out a plate of fried eggs and echoing huskily:

"Ham—and!"

"Corn-beef-an'-cabbage!" "One harf-an'-harf!" "Make a sunstroke on the hash!" and other pleasing chants of the noon.

"What 'll yer have?"

A thin and nervous young woman swooped between them and mopped off the sloppy, crumby table with her apron.

"What's good?" asked Joe.

The waitress regarded Joe with half-shut eyes.

"*You* want veal cutlets."

And she wafted the information to the cook.

"Well, Joe," said the practical Briggs, unable to hold in his excitement any longer, "let's get down to business."

Joe leaned forward.

"I'm thinking of starting up the printery, Marty."

Marty flushed, choked, and could hardly speak.

"I *knew* you would, Joe."

"Yes," Joe went on, "but I'm not going to go on with it."

Marty spoke sharply:

"Why not?"

"I'll tell you later, Marty."

"Not—lost your nerve? The fire?"

Joe laughed softly.

"Other reasons—Marty."

"Retire?" Marty's appetite was spoiled. He pushed the veal cutlet from him. He was greatly agitated. "Retire—*you?* I can see you doing nothing, blamed if I can't. Gettin' sporty, Joe, in your old age, aren't you? You'll be wearing one of these dress-suits next and a flasher in yer chest. Huh!" he snorted, "you'd make a good one on the shelf!"

Joe laughed with joy.

"With my flunkies and my handmaids. No, Marty, I'm going into another business."

"What business?"

"Editing a magazine."

"And what do you know about editing a magazine?"

"What do most of the editors know?" queried Joe. "You don't have to know anything. Everybody's editing magazines nowadays."

"A magazine!" Marty was disgusted. "You're falling pretty low, Joe. Why don't you stick to an honest business? Gosh! you'd make a queer fist editing a magazine!"

Joe was delighted.

"Well, there are reasons, Marty."

"What reasons?"

So Joe in a shaking voice unfolded his philosophy, and as he did so Marty became dazed and aghast, gazing at his boss as if Joe had turned into some unthinkable zoological oddity. Into Marty's prim-set life, with its definite boundaries and unmysterious exactness, was poured a vapor of lunacy. Finally Joe wound up with:

"So you see I've got to do what little I can to help straighten things. You see, Marty? Now, what do you think of it? Give me your honest opinion."

Marty spoke sharply:

"You want to know what I really think?"

"Every word of it!"

"Now see here, Joe," Marty burst out, "you and I grew up in the business together, and we know each other well enough to speak out, even if you are my boss, don't we?"

"We do, Marty!"

Marty leaned over.

"Joe, I think you're a blamed idiot!"

Joe laughed.

"Well, Marty, if it weren't for the blamed idiots—like Columbus and Tom Watts and the

prophets and Abe Lincoln—this world would be in a pretty mess."

But Marty refused to be convinced, even averring that the world *is* in a pretty mess, and that probably the aforementioned "idiots" had caused it to be so. Then finally he spoke caressingly:

"Ah, Joe, tell me it's a joke."

"No," said Joe, earnestly, "it's what I've got to face, Marty, and I need your backing."

Marty mused miserably.

"So the game's up, and you've changed, and we men can go to the dogs. Why, we can't run that printery without you. We'd go plumb to hell!"

Joe changed his voice—it became more commanding.

"Never mind now, Marty. I want your help to figure things out."

So Marty got out his little pad and the two drew close together.

"I want to figure on a weekly newspaper—I'm figuring big on the future—just want to see what it will come to. Say an edition of twenty thousand copies, an eight-page paper, eight by twelve, no illustrations."

Marty spoke humbly:

"As you say, Joe. Cheap paper?"

"Yes."

"Do your own printing?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'll need a good cylinder press for a starter."

"How much help?"

"Make-up man—pressman—feeder—that's on the press. Will you set up the paper yourself?"

"No, I'll have it set up outside."

"Who'll bind it, fold, and address?"

"The bindery—give that out, too."

"And who'll distribute?"

"Outside, too."

"The news company?"

"No, I won't deal with any news company. I want to go direct to the people. Say I get a hundred newsmen to distribute in their neighborhood?"

"But who'll get the paper to the newsmen?"

"Hire a truck company—so much a week."

"And how much will you charge for the paper?"

"Cent a copy."

"Can't do it," said Marty.

"Why not?"

Marty did some figuring, so they raised the price to two cents. And then they put in twenty minutes and worked out the scheme. It summed up as follows:

Paper sells at 2 cts., 20,000	$400
Expenses	340
Profit	$ 60

Joe was exultant.

"Sixty profit! Well, I'm hanged."

"Not so fast, Joe," said Marty, drily. "They say no one ever started a magazine without getting stuck, and anyway, you just reckon there'll be expenses that will run you into debt right along. But of course there'll be the ads."

"I don't know about the ads," said Joe. "But the figures please me just the same."

Marty squirmed in his chair.

"Joe," he burst out, "how the devil is the printery going to run without you?"

Their eyes met, and Joe laughed.

"Will it be worth twenty-five thousand dollars when it's rebuilt and business booming again?" he asked, shrewdly.

"More than that!" said Marty Briggs.

"Then," said Joe, "I want *you* to take it."

"*Me?*" Marty was stunned.

"You can do it easily. I'll take a mortgage and you pay it off two thousand a year and five per cent. interest. That will still leave you a tidy profit."

"*Me?*" Then Marty laughed loud. "Listen, my ears! Did you hear that?"

"Think it over!" snapped Joe. "Now come along."

VII

LAST OF JOE BLAINE AND HIS MEN

SO the printery was rehabilitated, and one gray morning Joe, with a queer tremor at his heart, went down the street and met many of his men in the doorway. They greeted him with strange, ashamed emotion.

"Morning, Mr. Joe. . . . It's been a long spell. . . . Good to see the old place again. . . . Bad weather we're having. . . . How've you been?"

The loft seemed strangely the same, strangely different—fresh painted, polished, smelling new and with changed details. For a few moments Joe felt the sharp shock of the fire again, especially when he heard the trembling of the hat factory overhead . . . and that noon the bright faces and laughter in the hallway! It seemed unreal; like ghosts revisiting; and he learned later that the first morning the hat factory had set to work, some of the girls had become hysterical.

But as he stood in his private office, looking out into the gray loft, and feeling how weird and swift are life's changes, the men turned on the

electrics, and the floors and walls began their old trembling and the presses clanked and thundered. He could have wept. To Joe this moment of starting up had always been precious: it had seemed to bring him something he had missed; something that fitted like an old shoe and was friendly and familiar. All at once he felt as if he could not leave this business, could not leave these men.

And yet he had only three days with them to wind up the business and install Marty Briggs. And then there was a last supper of Joe Blaine and his men. Those days followed one another with ever-deepening gloom, in which the trembling printery and all the human beings that were part of it seemed steeped in a growing twilight. Do what Joe would and could in the matter of good-fellowship, loud laughter, and high jocularity, the darkness thickened staggeringly. Hardly had Joe settled the transfer of the printery to Marty, when the rumor of the transaction swept the business. At noon men gathered in groups and whispered together as if some one had died, and one after another approached Joe with a:

"Mr. Joe, is it true what the fellows say?"

"Yes, Tom."

"Going to leave us, Mr. Joe?"

"Going, Tom."

"*Got* to go?"

"I'm afraid I have to."

"I'll hate to go home and tell my wife, Mr. Joe. She'll cry her head off."

"Oh, come! come!"

"Say—we men, Mr. Joe—"

But Tom would say no more, and go off miserably; only to be replaced by Eddie or Mack or John, and then some such dialogue would be repeated. Under the simple and inadequate words lurked that sharp tragedy of life, the separation of comrades, that one event which above all others darkens the days and gives the sense of old age. And the men seemed all the closer to Joe because of the tragedy of the fire. All these conversations told on Joe. He went defiantly about the shop, but invariably his spoken orders were given in a humble, almost affectionate tone, as (with one arm loosely about the man):

"Say, Sam, *don't* you think you'd better use a little benzine on that?"

And Sam would answer solemnly:

"I've always done as you've said, Mr. Joe—since the very first."

His men succeeded in this way in making Joe almost as miserable as when he had parted from Myra; and indeed a man's work is blood of his blood, heart of his heart.

Possibly one thing that hurt Joe as much as anything else was a curious change in Marty Briggs. That big fellow, from the moment that Joe had handed over the business, began to un-

fold hitherto unguessed bits of personality. He ceased to lament Joe's going; he went about the shop with a certain jaunty air of proprietorship; and the men, for some unknown reason, began to call him Mr. Briggs. He even grew a bit cool toward Joe. Joe watched him with a sad sort of mirth, and finally called him into the office one morning. He put his hands on the big man's shoulders and looked in his face.

"Marty," he said, "I hope you're not going to make an ass of yourself."

"What do you mean?" murmured Marty.

Joe brought his face a little nearer.

"I want to know something."

"What?"

Joe spoke slowly:

"*Are you Marty Briggs now or are you Martin Briggs?*"

Marty tried to laugh; tried to look away.

"What's the difference?" he muttered.

"Difference?" Joe's voice sank. "Marty, I thought you were a bigger man. It's only the little peanut fellows who want to be bossy and holier-than-thou. *Don't make any mistake!*"

"I guess," muttered Marty, "I can steer things O.K."

"You'd better!" Joe spoke a little sharply. "Our men here are as big as you and I, every one of them. My God! you'll have to pay the price of being a high muck-a-muck, Marty! So, don't forget it!"

Marty tried to laugh again.

"You're getting different lately," he suggested.

"I?" Joe laughed harshly. "What if it's you? But don't let's quarrel. We've been together too long. Only, let's both remember. That's all, Marty!"

All of which didn't mend matters. It was that strangest of all the twists of human nature—the man rising from the ranks turning against his fellows.

On Friday night Joe climbed the three flights of the stuffy Eightieth Street tenement and had supper with the Ranns. That family of five circled him with such warmth of love that the occasion burst finally into good cheer. The two girls, seated opposite him, sent him smiling and wordless messages of love. Not a word was said of the fire, but John kept serving him with large portions of the vegetables and the excellent and expensive steak which had been bought in his honor; and John's wife kept spurring him on.

"I'm sure Mr. Joe could stand just a weeny sliver more."

"Mrs. Rann "—Joe put down knife and fork—"do you want me to *burst?*"

"A big man like you? Give him the sliver, John."

"John, spare me!"

"Mr. Joe "—John waved his hand with an air of finality—"in the shop what you says goes, but

in this here home I take my orders from the old lady. See?"

"Nellie—Agnes—" he appealed, despairingly, to his little loves, "*you* save me! Don't you love me any more?"

This set Nellie and Agnes giggling with delight.

"Give him a pound, a whole pound!" cried Agnes, who was the elder.

A nice sliver was waved dripping on Joe's plate, which Joe proceeded to eat desperately, all in one mouthful. Whereupon the Ranns were convulsed with joy, and John kept "ha-ha-ing" as he thumped the table, and went to such excesses that he seemed to put his life in peril and Mrs. Rann and the girls had to rise and pound him until their hands hurt.

"Serves you right, John," said Joe, grimly. "Try it again, and you'll get a stroke."

"Ain't he the limit?" queried John, gasping.

Then Mrs. Rann went mysteriously to the cupboard, and the girls began to whisper together and giggle. And then Mrs. Rann brought something covered with a napkin, and then the napkin was removed. It was pie.

Joe pretended that he didn't know the secret, and leaned far over and gazed at it.

"It's —well, what is it?"

Mrs. Rann's voice rang with exultation.

"Your favorite, Mr. Joe."

"Not—*raisin pie?*"

A shout went up from all. Then real moisture

came stealthily to Joe's eyes, and he looked about on those friendly faces, and murmured:

"Thoughtful, mightily thoughtful!"

There was a special bottle of wine—rather cheap, it is true, but then it was served with raisin pie and with human love, which made it very palatable. Mrs. Rann fixed John with a sharp glance through her glasses and cleared her throat several times, and finally Agnes gave him a poke in the ribs, whispering:

"Hurry up, dad!"

John blushed and rose to his feet.

"Mr. Joe, I ain't a talker, anyway on my feet. But, Mr. Joe, you've been my boss six years. And, Mr. Joe—" He paused, stuck, and gazed appealingly at Joe.

Joe rose to the occasion.

"So it's, here's to good friends, isn't it, John?"

John beamed.

"That's it—you took the words out of my mouth! Toast!"

So they drank.

Then Joe rose, and spoke musingly, tenderly:

"There's a trifle I want to say to you to-night —to every one of you. I can't do without you. Now it happens that I'm going to put a press in my new business and I'm looking for a first-class crackerjack of a pressman. Do you happen to know any one in this neighborhood who could take the job?"

He sat down. There was profound silence.

And then Mrs. Rann took off her spectacles and sobbed. John reached over and took Joe's hand, and his voice was husky with tears.

"Mr. Joe! Mr. Joe! Ah, say, you make me feel foolish!"

Joe stayed with them late that night, and when he left, the kisses of the two girls moist on his cheeks, he had no doubt of his life-work. But next day, Saturday—the last day—was downright black. Things went wrong, and the men steered clear of Joe.

"Don't bother *him*," they said, meaning to spare him, and thereby increasing his pain. Men spoke in hushed tones, as soldiers might on the eve of a fatal battle, and even Marty Briggs dropped his new mannerisms and was subdued and simple.

Then Joe went off into a state of mind which might be described as the "hazes"—a thing he did now and then. At such times the word went round:

"The old man's got 'em again!"

And he was left well alone, for the good reason that he was unapproachable. He seemed not to listen to spoken words, nor to pay any attention to the world about him. The men, however, appreciated these spells, for, as a rule, something came of them—they bore good practical fruit, the sure test of all sanity.

The day finally wore away, to every one's relief. Joe took a last look around at all the

familiar scene, shut his desk, handed over the keys to Marty (who could not speak because he was half-choked), sang out, "See you later, boys!" heard for the last time the sharp ring of the door-bell and the slam of the door, and hurried away. Then at last night came, and with night the last supper (as already announced) of Joe Blaine and His Men.

By Monday there would be painted an addition on that door, namely:

MARTIN BRIGGS

SUCCESSOR TO

The supper was held in the large hall, up-stairs, of Pfaff's, on East Eighty-sixth Street. The large table was a dream of green and white, of silver and glass, and the men hung about awkwardly silent in their Sunday best. Then Joe cried:

"Start the presses!"

There came a good laugh then to break the icy air, and they sat down and were served by flying waiters, who in this instance had the odd distinction of appearing to be the "upper classes" serving the "lower"—a distinction, up to date, not over-eagerly coveted by society. For the waiters wore the conventional dress of "gentlemen" and the diners were in plain and common clothes.

At first the diners were in a bit of a funk, but

Pfaff's excellent meats and cool, sparkling wines soon set free in each a scintillant human spirit, and the banquet took on almost an air of gaiety.

Finally there came the coffee and the ice-cream in forms, and Martin Briggs rose. There was a stamping of feet, a clanking of knives on glasses, a cry of "Hear! Hear!"

Martin Briggs knew it by heart and launched it with the aid of two swallows of water. His voice boomed big.

"Fellow-workers, friends, and the Old Man!"

This produced tumults of applause.

"We are met to-night on a solemn occasion. Ties are to be severed, friends parted. Such is life. Mr. Blaine—" (Cries from the far end of the table, "Say, Joe! say, Joe!") "Mr. Joe has been our friend, through all these long years. He has been our friend, our boss, our co-worker. Never did he spare himself; often he spared us. He had created an important business, a profitable business, a business which has brought a good living to every one of us. It is not for us to talk of the catastrophe—this is not the occasion for that. Enough to say that to-night Mr. Joe leaves that business. Others must carry it on. My sentiment is that these others must continue in the same spirit of Mr. Joe. That's my sentiment." (Roars of applause, stamping of feet, but one voice heard in talk with a neighbor, "Say, I guess his wife wrote that, Bill.") "So I propose a toast. To Mr. Joe, now and forever!"

They rose, they clanked glasses, they drank. Then they sat down and felt that something was wrong. Marty surely had missed fire.

Whereupon John Rann, blushing, rose to his feet, and began to stammer:

"Say, fellers, do you mind if I put in a word?" (Cries: "Not a bit!" "Soak it him, Johnny.") "Well, I want to say," his voice rose, "Joe Blaine is *it.*" (Applause, laughter, stamping.) "He's jest one of us." (Cries: "You bet!" "You've hit it, Johnny!" "Give us more!") "He's a friend." (Cries: "That's the dope!") "He never did a mean thing in his life." (One loud cry: "Couldn't if he wanted to!") "Say," (Cries: "Go ahead!" "Nobody 'll stop yer!" "Give him hell!" Laughter.) "We fellers never appreciated this here Joe Blaine, did we?" (Cries: "Gosh no!") "But we do *now!*" (Uproarious and prolonged applause.) "Say, fellers, he's been like a regular father to us kids." (A strange silence.) "He's been— Oh, hell!" (Speaker wipes his eyes with a red handkerchief. Strange silence prolonged. Then one voice: "Tell him to his face, John. 'Bout time he knew.") "Joe Blaine" (speaker faces Mr. Blaine, and tries not to choke), "if any one tries to say that you had anything to do with the fire— he's a *damned liar!*"

A thrill charged the men; they became pale; they gazed on Joe, who looked as white as linen; and suddenly they burst forth in a wildness, a

shouting, a stamping, a cry of: "Mr. Joe! Mr. Joe! Mr. Joe!"

Joe arose; he leaned a little forward; he trembled visibly, his rising hand shaking so that he dropped it. Then at last he spoke:

"Yes—John is my friend. And you—are my friends. Yes. But—you're wrong. I *was* to blame." He paused. "I *was* to blame. Here, to-night, I want to say this: Those girls, those comrades of ours—all that went to waste with them—well," his voice broke, "I'm going to try to make good for them. . . ."

For a moment he stood there, his face working strangely as if he were going to break down, and the men looked away from him. Then he went on in a voice warmly human and tender:

"You and I, boys, we grew up together. I know your wives and children. You've given me happy hours. I've made you stand for a lot—your old man was considerable boy—had his bad habits, his queer notions. Once in awhile went crazy. But we managed along, quarreling just enough to hit it off together. Remember how I fired Tommy three times in one week? Couldn't get rid of him. Oh, Tommy, what 'pi' you made of things! Great times we've had, great times. It hurts me raw." He paused, looking round at them. They were glancing at him furtively with shining eyes. "Hurts me raw to think those times are over—for me. But the dead have called me. I go out into another world. I go

out into a great fight. I may fail—quite likely I will. But I shall be backed. Your love goes with me, and I've got a big job ahead." Again he paused, overcome. Then he tried to smile, tried to smooth out the tragic with a forced jocularity. "Now, boys, behave. Mind you don't work too much. And don't all forget the old man. And—but that's enough, I guess."

The silence was terrible. Some of those big men were crying softly like stricken children. It was the last requiem over the dead, the last flare-up of the tragic fire. They crowded round Joe. He was blind himself with tears, though he felt a strange quiet in his heart.

And then he was out in the starry autumn night, walking home, murmuring:

"It's all over. That's out of my life."

And he felt as if something had died within him.

VIII

THE WIND IN THE OAKS

EARLY Monday evening there came a note from Myra:

I wanted you to know that I am leaving for the country—to-morrow—to get a rest.

MYRA.

Joe at once put on his hat and coat and went out. The last meeting with his men had given him a new strength, a heightened manhood. Like a man doomed to death, he felt beyond despair now. He only knew he must go to Myra and set straight their relationship as a final step before he plunged into the great battle. No more weakness! No more quarreling! But clear words and definite understanding!

He went up the stoop and rang the bell. A servant opened the door, showed him into the dimly lighted parlor, and went up the stairs with his name. He heard her footsteps, light, hesitant. She appeared before him, pale and sick and desperate.

"What do you want?" she asked in a tortured voice.

He arose and came close to her. He spoke authoritatively:

"Myra, get on your things. We must take a walk."

Her shifting eyes glanced up, gave him their full luminous gray and all the trouble of her heart.

"Myra," his voice deepened, and struck through her, "you must go with me to-night. It's our last chance."

She turned and was gone. He heard her light footsteps ascending; he waited, wondering, hoping; and then she came down again, showing her head at the door. She had on the little rounded felt hat, and she carried her muff.

They went out together, saying nothing, stepping near one another under the lamps and over the avenues, and into the Park. It was a strange, windy night, touched with the first bleakness of winter, tinged with the moaning melancholy of the tossing oak-trees, and with streaks of faint reflected city lights in the far heavens.

It was their last night together. Both knew it. There was no help for it. The great issues of life were sweeping them away into black gulfs of the future, where there might never be meeting again, never hand-touch nor sound of each other's voice. And strangely life deepened in their hearts, and they were swept by the mystery of being alive . . . alive in the star-streaked

darkness of space, alive with so many other brief creatures that brightened for a moment in the gloom and then sank away into the stormy heart of nature. And Love contended with Death, and the little labors of man helped Death to crush Love; and so that moment of existence, that brief span, became a mere brute struggle, a clash, a fight, a thing sordid and worse than death.

Out of the mystery, each, from some unimaginable distance, had come forth and met here on the earth, met for a wild moment, a moment that gave them lightning-lit glimpses of that mystery, only to part from each other now, each to return into the darkness.

They felt in unison more than they could ever say. And it was the last night together.

They sat down on a bench, under those mournful boughs, under the lamentations of the oaks.

"Myra," said Joe.

She murmured, "Yes."

His voice was charged with some of the strangeness of the night, some significance of the mystery of life and death.

"You read my letter. . . ."

"Yes."

"And you understand . . . at last?"

"I don't know. . . . I can't tell."

He paused; he leaned nearer.

"Why are you going away?"

"I've been sick," she whispered. "The doctor told me to go."

"For long?"

"For a rest."

"And you go to-morrow?"

"I go to-morrow."

"*Without forgiving me?*" He leaned very near.

There was a palpitating silence, a silence that searched their souls, and sharply then Myra cried out:

"Oh, Joe! Joe! This is killing me!"

"Myra!" he cried.

He drew her close, very close, stroking her cheek, and the tears ran over his fingers.

"Oh, don't you see," he went on, brokenly, "I can't ask you to come with me? And yet I must go?"

"I don't know," she sobbed. "I must go away and rest . . . and think . . . and try to understand. . . ."

"And may I write to you? . . ."

"Yes," she murmured.

"And I am forgiven?"

"Forgive me!" she sobbed.

They could say no more, but sat in the wild darkness, clasping each other as if they could not let one another go. . . . How could they send each other forth to go in loneliness and homelessness to the ends of the earth? The hours passed as they talked brokenly together, words of remorse, of love, of forgiveness.

And then finally they arose—it was very late—and Myra whispered, clinging to him:

"We must say good-by here!"

"Good-by!" he cried . . . and they kissed.

"Joe," she exclaimed, "take care of yourself! Do just that for me!"

"I will," he said huskily, "but you must do the same for me. Promise."

"I promise!"

"Oh, Joe!" she cried out, "what is life doing with us?"

And they went back, confused and strange, through the lighted streets. They stood before her house.

"Till you come back!" he whispered.

She flashed about then, a look of a new wonder in her eyes.

"If only I thought you were right in your work!" she cried.

"You will! You will, Myra! And in that hope, we will go on!"

She was gone; the door shut him out of her life. And all alone, strong, bitter, staring ahead, Joe stepped off to begin the new life . . . to plunge into the battle.

PART II

THE TEST

I

BEGINNINGS

IT was in that red gash of crosstown brick—West Tenth Street—that the new life began. The neighborhood was quaint and poor, a part of that old Greenwich Village which at one time was a center of quiet and chaste respectability, with its winding streets, its old-fashioned low brick houses, its trees, its general air of detachment and hushed life. Now it was a scene of slovenliness and dust, of miserable lives huddled thickly in inadequate houses, of cheap roomers and boarders, of squalid poverty—a mix of many nations well-sprinkled with saloons.

But the house was quite charming—three stories, red brick, with a stoop of some ten steps, and long French windows on the first floor. Behind those French windows was a four-room flat; beneath them, in the basement, a room with iron-grated windows. Into that flat Joe and his mother moved.

The invasion was unostentatious. No one could have dreamed that the tall, homely man, dashing in and out in his shirt-sleeves between the rooms and the moving-van drawn up at the

curb, had come down with the deliberate purpose of making a neighborhood out of a chaos, of organizing that jumble of scattered polyglot lives. . . . In the faded sunshine of the unusually warm winter afternoon, with its vistas of gold-dusty air, and its noise of playing children and on-surging trolleys and trucks and all the minute life of the saloons and the stores—women hanging out of windows to get the recreation of watching the confused drama of the streets, neighbors meeting in doorways, young men laughing and chatting in clusters about lamp-posts—Joe toiled valiantly and happily. He would rapidly glance at the thickly peopled street and wonder, with a thrill, how soon he would include these lives in his own, how soon he would grip and rouse and awaken the careless multitude. . . .

All was strange, all was new. Everything that was deep in his life—all the roots he had put down through boyhood, youth, and manhood into the familiar life of Yorkville—was torn up and transplanted to this fresh and unfriendly soil. . . . He felt as if he were in an alien land, under new skies, in a new clime, and there was all the romance of the mysterious and all the fear of the untried. Beginnings always have the double quality of magic and timidity—the dreaded, delicious first plunge into cold water, the adventurous striking out into unknown perils. . . . Did it not at moments seem like madness to

dare single-handed into this vast and careless population? Was he not merely a modern Don Quixote tilting at windmills? Well, so be it, he thought; the goal might be unreachable, but the quest was life itself.

He had an inkling of the monstrous size of New York. All his days he had lived within a half-hour's ride of Greenwich Village, and yet it was a new world to him. So the whole city was but a conglomeration of nests of worlds, woven together by a few needs and the day's work, worlds as yet undiscovered in every direction, huge tracts of peoples of all races leading strange and unassimilated lives. He felt lost in the crowded immensity, a helpless, obscure unit in the whirl of life.

He had fallen in love with Greenwich Village from the first day he had explored it for a promising dwelling-place. Here, he knew, lived Sally Heffer, and here doubtless he would meet her and she would help shape his fight, perhaps be the woman to gird on his armor, put sword in his hand, and send him forth. For he needed her, needed her as a child needs a teacher, as a recruit needs a disciplined veteran. It was she who had first revealed the actual world to him; it was she who had first divined his power and his purpose; it was she who had released him from guilt by showing him a means of expiation.

And yet, withal, he feared to meet her. There had been something terrible about her that after-

noon at Carnegie Hall, and something that awed him that evening at the Woman's League. Until she had broken down and wept, she had hardly seemed a woman—rather a voice crying in the wilderness, a female Isaiah, the toilers become articulate. And he could not think of her as a simple, vivacious young woman. How would she greet him? Would her eyes remember his part in the fire?

At least, so he told himself, he would not seek her out (he had her address from Fannie Lemick) until he had something to show for his new life—until, possibly, he had a copy of that magazine which was still a hypothesis and a chimera. Then he would nerve himself and go to her and she should judge him as she pleased.

That first supper with his mother had a sweetness new to their lives. He ran out to the butcher, the grocer, and the delicatessen man, and came home laden with packages. The stove in the rear kitchen was set alight; the wooden table in the center was spread with cloth and cutlery; and they sat down opposite each other, utterly alone . . . no boarding-house flutter and gossip and noise, no unpleasant jarring personalities, no wholesale cookery. All was quiet and peace—a brooding, tinkling silence. They both smiled and smiled, their eyes moist, and the food tasted so good. Blessed bread that they broke together, the cup that they shared between them! The moment became sacred,

human, stirred by all the old, old miraculousness of home, that deepest need of humanity, that rich relationship that cuts so much deeper than the light touch-and-go of the world.

Joe spoke awkwardly.

"So we're here, mother . . . and it's ripping, isn't it?"

She could hardly speak, but her eyes seemed to sparkle with a second youth.

"Yes," she murmured, "it's the first time we've had anything like this since you were a boy."

They both thought of his father, and the vanished days of the shanty on the hillside, and his mother thought:

"People must live out their own lives in their own homes."

There was something that fed the roots of her woman-nature to have this place apart, this quiet shelter where she ruled. It would be a joy to go marketing, it would be a delight to cook, and it was charming to live so intimately with her son. They were a family again.

After supper they washed the dishes together, laughing and chatting. There were a hundred pleasing details to consider—where to place furniture, what to buy, whether to have a servant or not (Joe insisted on one), and all the incidents of the day to go over.

And then after the dish-washing they stopped work, and sat down in the front office amid the

packing-cases and the trunks and the litter and débris. The gas was lighted above them, and the old-fashioned stove which stood in the center and sprouted up a pipe nearly to the ceiling and then at right angles into the wall was made red-hot with wood and coal. Joe smoked and his mother sewed, and a hush seemed to fall on the city, broken only by the echo of passing foot-steps and the mellowed thunder of the intermittent trolley-cars.

"And they call this a slum," muttered Joe.

In fact, save possibly for less clear air and in the summer a noise of neighbors, they might have been living in New York's finest neighborhood—almost a disappointment to two people prepared to plunge into dirt, danger, and disease. . . . Later Joe learned that some of the city's magazine writers had settled in the district on purpose, not because they were meeting a crisis, but because they liked it, liked its quaint old flavor, its colorful life, its alien charm, and not least, its cheaper rents.

But this evening all was unknown save the joy and peace of a real home. They went to bed early, Joe in the room next the office, his mother in the adjoining room next the kitchen, but neither slept for a long time. They lay awake tingling with a strange happiness, a fine freedom, a freshness of re-created life. Only to the pioneer comes this thrill of a new-made Eden, only to those who tear themselves from the easy ruts and

cut hazardous clearings in the unventured wilderness. It is like being made over, like coming with fresh heart and eyes upon the glories of the earth; it is the only youth of the world.

The night grew late and marvelously hushed, a silence almost oppressive, where every noise seemed like an invader, and Joe, lying there keenly awake, seemed to feel the throb of the world, the pauseless pulsations of that life that beats in every brain and every heart of the earth; that life that, more intense than human love and thought, burns in the suns that swing about heaven rolling the globe of earth among them; that life that enfolds with tremendous purpose the little human creature in the vastness, that somehow expresses itself and heightens and changes itself in human lives and all the dreams and doings of men. Joe felt that life, thrilling to it, opening his heart to it, letting it surcharge and overflow his being with strength and joy. And he knew then that he lay as in a warm nest of the toilers and the poor, that crowded all about him in every direction were sleeping men and women and little children, all recently born, all soon to die, he himself shortly to be stricken out of these scenes and these sensations. It was all mystery unplumbable, unbelievable . . . that this breath was not to go on forever, that this brain was to be stopped off, this heart cease like a run-down clock, this exultation and sorrow to

leave like a mist, scattered in that life that bore it. . . . That he, Joe Blaine, was to die!

Surely life was marvelous and sacred; it was not to be always a selfish scramble, a money rush, a confusion and jumble, but rather something of harmony and mighty labors and mingled joys. He felt great strength; he felt equal to his purposes; he was sure he could help in the advancing processes. . . . Even as he was part of the divine mystery, so he could wield that divineness in him to lift life to new levels, while the breath was in his body, while the glow was in his brain.

And he thought of Myra, his mate in the mystery, and in the night he yearned for her, hungered through all his being. She had written him a note; it came to him from the mountains. It ran:

Dear Joe,—You will be glad to know that I am getting back to myself. The peace and stillness of the white winter over the hills is healing me. It seems good merely to exist, to sleep and eat and exercise and read. I can't think now how I behaved so unaccountably those last few weeks, and I wonder if you will ever understand. I have been reading over and over again your long letter, trying hard to puzzle out its meanings, but I fear I am very ignorant. I know nothing of the crisis you speak of. I know that "ye have the poor always with you," I know that there is much suffering in the world—I have suffered myself—but I cannot see that living among the poor is going to help vitally. Should we not all live on the highest level possible? Level up instead of leveling down. Igno-

rance, dirt, and sickness do not attract me . . . and now here among the hills the terrible city seems like a fading nightmare. It would be better if people lived in the country. I feel that the city is a mistake. But of one thing I am sure. I understand that you cannot help doing what you are doing, and I know that it would have been a wrong if I had interfered with your life. I would have been a drag on you and defeated your purposes, and in the end we would both have been very unhappy. It seems to me most marriages are. Write me what you are doing, where you are living, and how you are. Yours,

MYRA.

He had smiled over some of the phrases in this letter, particularly, "I feel that the city is a mistake." Would Myra ever know that her very personality and all of her life were interwoven inextricably with the industrial city—that the clothes she wore, the food she ate, the books she studied, the letter she wrote him, even down to ink, pen, and paper, the education and advantages she enjoyed, were all wrought in the mills, the mines, the offices, and by the interchange and inweaving and mighty labors of industrialism? The city teacher is paid by taxes levied on the commerce and labors of men, and the very farmer cannot heighten his life without exchange with the city.

And so her letter made him smile. Yet at the same time it stirred him mightily. All through it he could read renunciation; she was giving him up; she was loosening her hold over him;

she was nobly sacrificing her love to his life-work. And she announced herself as teachable and receptive. She could not yet understand, but understanding might come in time.

So in the night he tried to send his thought over the hills, flash his spirit into hers, in the great hope that she would thrill with a new comprehension, a new awakening. . . . In a world so mysterious, in an existence so strange, so impossible, so unbelievable, might such a miracle be stranger than the breath he breathed and the passions he felt?

And so in that hope, that great wild hope, he fell asleep in the uneventful beginnings of the battle. And all through those unconscious hours forces were shaping about him and within him to bear his life through strange ways and among strange people. His theories, so easy as he drank them out of books, were to be tested in the living world of men and women, in that reality that hits back when we strike it, and that batters us about like driftwood in the whirlpool.

II

THE NINE-TENTHS

STANDING on Washington Heights—that hump on northwestern Manhattan Island —gazing, say, from a window of the City College whose gray and quaint cluster fronts the morn as on a cliff above the city—one sees, at seven of a sharp morning, a low-hung sun in the eastern skies, a vast circle and lift of mild blue heavens, and at one's feet, down below, the whole sweep of New York from the wooded ridges of the Bronx to the Fifty-ninth Street bridge and the golden tip of the Metropolitan Tower. It is a flood of roofs sweeping south to that golden, flashing minaret, a flood bearing innumerable high mill chimneys, church steeples, school spires, and the skeleton frames of gas-works. Far in the east the Harlem River lies like a sheet of dazzling silver, dotted with boats; every skylight, every point of glass or metal on the roofs, flashes in the sun, and, gazing down from that corner in the sky, one sees the visible morning hymn of the city—a drift from thousands of house chimneys of delicate unraveling skeins of white-blue smoke lifting from those human dwellings like aerial

spirits. It is the song of humanity rising, the song of the ritual of breaking bread together, of preparation for the day of toil, the song of the mothers sending the men to work, the song of the mothers kissing and packing to school the rosy, laughing children.

It might be hard to imagine that far to the south in that moving human ocean, a certain Joe Blaine, swallowed in the sea, was yet as real a fact as the city contained—that to himself he was far from being swallowed, that he was, in fact, so real to himself that the rest of the city was rather shadowy and unreal, and that he was immensely concerned in a thousand-flashing torrent of thoughts, in a mix-up of appetite and desires, and in the condition and apparel of his body. That as he sat at his desk, for instance, it was important to him to discover how he could break himself of a new habit of biting the end of his pen-holder.

And yet, under that flood of roofs, Joe was struggling with that crucial problem. He finally settled it by deciding to smoke lots of cigars, and proceeded to light one as a beginning. He smoked one, then a second, then a third—which was certainly bad for his health. He was in the throes of a violent reaction.

Several days of relentless activity had followed the moving in. There was much to do. The four rooms became immaculately clean—sweetened up with soap and water, with neat wall-

paper, with paint and furniture. Even the dark inner bedrooms contrived to look cozy and warm and inviting. Joe's mother was a true New England housekeeper, which meant scrupulous order, cleanliness, and brightness. The one room exempt from her rule was Joe's. After the first clean-up, his mother did not even try to begin on it.

"You're hopeless, Joe," she laughed, "and you'll ruin faster than I can set right."

And so that editorial office soon became a nest of confusion. The walls were lined with bookshelves and a quaint assortment of books, old and new, populated not only these, but the floor, the two tables, the roll-top desk, and here and there a chair. White paper began to heap up in the corners. Magazines—"my contemporaries," said the proud editor—began their limitless flood. And the matting on the floor was soon worn through by Joe's perpetual pacing.

The whole home, however, began to have atmosphere—personality. There was something open, hospitable, warm about it—something comfortable and livable.

Among the first things Joe did was to procure two assistants. One was the bookkeeper, Nathan Slate, a lean and dangling individual, who collapsed over his high desk in the corner like a many-bladed penknife. He was thin and cadaverous, and spoke in a meek and melancholy voice, studied and slow. He dressed in black

and tried to suppress his thin height by stooping low and hanging his head. The other addition was Billy, the office-boy, a sharp, bright youth with red hair and brilliant blue eyes.

There was much else to do. For instance, there were the money affairs to get in shape. Joe secured a five-per-cent. mortgage with his capital. Marty Briggs paid down two thousand cash and was to pay two thousand a year and interest. So Joe could figure his income at somewhat over six thousand dollars, and, as he hoped that he and his mother would use not more than fifteen hundred a year, or, at the most, two thousand, he felt he had plenty to throw into his enterprise.

Among the first things that Joe discovered was a gift of his own temperament. He was a born crowd-man, a "mixer." He found he could instantly assume the level of the man he talked with, and that his tongue knew no hindrance. Thought flowed easily into speech. This gave him a freedom among men, a sense of belonging anywhere, and singled him out from the rest. It gave him, too, the joy of expression—the joy of throwing out his thought and getting its immediate reaction in other lives. Yet he understood perfectly the man who seemed shy and recluse, who was choked-off before strangers, and who yet burned to be a democrat, to give and take, to share alien lives, to be of the moving throng of life. Such a man was the victim

either of a wrong education, an education of repression that discouraged any personal display, or he had a twist in his temperament. Joe, who began to be well aware of his gift, used it without stint and found that it had a contagious quality—it loosened other people up; it unfolded their shy and secret petals like sun heat on a bud; it made the desert of personality blossom like the rose. He warmed the life about him because he could express himself.

So it was not hard for Joe to shift to this new neighborhood and become absorbed in its existence. Tradespeople, idlers, roomers and landlady in the house accepted him at once and felt as if they had known him all their lives. By a power almost of intuition he probed their obscure histories and entered into their destinies.

However, in spite of these activities and all the bustle and stir of fresh beginnings, Joe, that sunny morning, was suffering a sharp reaction. In the presence of Nathan Slate and Billy he was pretending to work, but his brain was as dry as a soda-cracker. It was that natural revulsion of the idealist following the first glow. Here he was, up against a reality, and yet with no definite plan, not even a name for his paper, and he had not even begun to penetrate the life about him. The throbbing moment had arrived when he must set his theories into motion, drive them out into the lives of the people, and get reactions. But how? In what way? His brain refused to

think, and he felt nothing save a misery and poverty of the spirit that were unendurable.

It seemed to him suddenly as if he had hastily embarked on a search for the fountain of eternal youth—a voyage that followed mirages, and was hollow and illusory. Beginnings, after the first flush, always have this quality of fake, and Joe was standing in the shadow-land between two lives. The old life was receding in the past; the new life had not yet appeared. Without training, without experience, without definite knowledge of the need to be met, with only a strong desire and a mixed ideal, and almost without his own volition, he found himself now sitting at a desk in West Tenth Street, with two employees, and nothing to do. How out of this emptiness was he to create something vital?

This naturally brought a pang he might have anticipated. He had a sudden powerful hankering for the old life. That at least was man-size—his job had been man's work. He looked back at those fruitful laborious days, with their rich interest and absorbing details, their human companionships, and had an almost irrepressible desire to rush out, take the elevated train, go down East Eighty-first Street, ascend the elevator, ring the bell, and enter his dominion of trembling, thundering presses. He could smell the old smells, he could see the presses and the men, he could hear the noise. That was where he belonged. Voluntarily he had exiled himself from

happiness and use. He wanted to go back—wanted it hard, almost groaned with homesickness.

Such struggles are death throes or birth throes. They are as real as two men wrestling. Joe could sit still no longer, could mask no longer the combat within him. So he rose hastily and went out and wandered about the shabby, unfriendly neighborhood. He had a mad desire, almost realized, to take the car straight to Eighty-first Street, and only the thought of Marty Briggs in actual possession held him back. Finally he went back and took lunch, and again tried the vain task of pretending to work.

It was three o'clock when he surrendered. He strode in to his mother.

"Mother," he said, "isn't there something we can do together?"

"In what way?"

"Any way. I've been idling all day and I'm half dead." He laughed strangely. "I believe I'm getting nerves, mother."

"Nerves!" She looked at him sharply. "What is it, Joe?"

"Oh! It's in-betweenness."

"I see." She smiled. "Well, there's some shopping to do—"

"Thank Heaven!"

So they went out together and took the Sixth Avenue car to Thirty-fourth Street. Their shopping took them to Fifth Avenue, and then, later,

up Broadway to Forty-second Street. It was a different New York they saw—in fact, the New York best known to the stranger. The gorgeous palaces of trade glittered and sparkled, shimmered and flashed, with jewels and silver, with silks and knick-knacks. The immense and rich plenty of earth, the products of factories and mills, were lavishly poured here, gathered in isles, about which a swarming sea of well-dressed women pushed and crowded. The high ceilings were hung with glowing moons of light; the atmosphere was magic with confused talk, shuffling footsteps, and all the hum and stir of a human hive. Up and down Fifth Avenue swept a black thick stream of motors and carriages in which women and men lounged and stared. The great hotels sucked in and poured out tides of jeweled and lace-wrapped creatures, and in the lighted interiors of restaurants were rouged cheeks and kindled eyes.

As Joe and his mother reached Forty-second Street, that whirpool of theaters released its matinée crowds, a flood of youth, beauty, brightness, and luxury.

And it seemed to Joe, seeing all this life from a Tenth Street viewpoint, that here was a great city of wealth and idleness. Evidently a large population had nothing to do save shop and motor, eat and idle. How could he from shabby Tenth Street send out a sheet of paper that would compete with these flashing avenues?

The sight depressed him. He said as much to his mother.

"This is New York," he said, "barbaric, powerful, luxuriant. These people are the power of the city—the mighty few—these are the owners. What can we do with them?"

His mother sensed then the struggle in his mind.

"Joe," she cried, "isn't there any place where we can see—the other people?"

There was. They took the car down to Eighth Street, they walked east, and entered little Washington Park, with its monumental arch, and its shadowy trees, its wide and curving walks —its general sense of being a green breathing-space in the sweep of streets. As they walked through the sharp wintry air in the closing sunlight, what time the blue electric lights gleamed out among the almost naked boughs, the six-o'clock whistles began blowing from factories all about them—a glad shriek that jumped from street to street over the city—and at once across the eastern plaza of the park streamed the strange torrent of the workers—a mighty, swift march of girls and boys, women and men, homeward bound, the day's work ended—a human stream, in the gray light, steeped in an atmosphere of accomplishment, sweet peace, solution. All life seemed to touch a moment of harvest.

Joe's mother was thrilled, and in spite of himself Joe felt his heart clutched, as it were, in a

vise. He felt the strange, strong, human grip. It was a marvelous spectacle, though common, daily, and cheap as life.

Joe's mother whispered, in a low voice:

"Joe, this is the real New York!"

And then again:

"Those others are only a fraction—these are the people."

"Yes," murmured Joe, his blood surging to his cheeks, "these are the nine-tenths."

They went closer to that mighty marching host—they saw the cheap garments—baggy trousers, torn shoes, worn shirts; they saw the earnest, tired faces, the white and toil-shrunk countenances, the poverty, the reality of pain and work, all pressing on in an atmosphere of serious progress, as if they knew what fires roared, what sinews ached down in the foundations of the world where the future is created. And Joe realized, as never before, that upon these people and their captains, their teachers and interpreters, rested the burdens of civilization; that the mighty city was wrought by their hands and those who dreamed with them, that the foam and sparkle of Broadway and Fifth Avenue bubbled up from that strong liquor beneath. And he believed that the second-generation idlers had somehow expropriated the toilers and were living like drones in the hive, and he felt that this could not be forever, and he was seized by the conviction that a change could only come through the

toilers themselves. Could these pale people but know their power, know their standing, know the facts of this strange double life, and then use their might wisely and well, constructively, creatively, to build up a better and fairer world, a finer justice, a more splendid day's work, a happier night's home! These that created a great city could, if trained, create a higher life in that city!

Surely the next few ages of the future had their work cut out for them—the most stupendous task the race had ever undertaken.

Then, after all, he was right. All who could must be dedicated to the work of sowing enlightenment, of yeasting the crowds with knowledge and love and light—all who could. Then he, too, could do his share; he, too, could reach this crowd. And these people—they were reachable. No theaters and restaurants competed with him here. Their hearts and minds were open. He could step in and share their lives. He had done so in his shop, and these were of the same human nature.

Power returned to him.

"Mother," he said, his eyes flashing, "it's all right. Now I'm ready to begin! I'm for the nine-tenths."

They turned, walking home in silence, and as they went the phrase "nine-tenths," which Joe must have picked up in some book on socialism or some sociological study, kept haunting his mind.

The new power released in him made his brain work like lightning—creatively. Thoughts crowded, combinations sprung up; he began to actively dream and scheme.

"I've got it!" he cried. "Why not call my paper *The Nine-Tenths?*"

"Good!"

He began to plan aloud as the quick thoughts flashed.

"An eight-page paper—weekly. An editorial, giving some of the plain facts about civilization —simple stuff to teach the people what industry means, what their work means, what they ought to be doing. Then news—news about all movements toward freedom—labor, strikes, reform, new laws, schools—news of all the forces working for betterment — a concrete statement of where the world stands to-day and what it is doing. But a fair sheet, mother. No railing, no bitterness, no bomb-throwing. Plenty of horse sense, plenty of banking the fires, of delaying wisely. No setting class against class. No under-rating of leaders and captains. Justice, but plenty of mercy. Facts, but plenty of philosophy to cool 'em off. Progress all the time, but no French revolutions. And when sides must be taken, no dishonest compromises, no cowardly broad-mindedness — but always with the weakest, the under dog, whenever their cause is good. That's my programme; that's *The Nine-Tenths.*"

"Of course," said his mother, " you'll see things clearer as you do them. There'll be changes."

"Surely!" His mind was already miles ahead. "Mother, I've got it now, for sure!"

"What now?" She laughed, enthusiastically.

"Isn't this a whopper? No *ads*."

"But why not, Joe? That would support the paper."

"No, not a line. I don't expect the paper to pay. That's where our money comes in. We mustn't carry a line. Don't you see? There's hardly a paper in the land that is free. They're influenced by their advertising—that's their bread and butter. And even if they're not influenced, people suspect they are. We must be free even of that suspicion. We can be free—utterly so—say what we please—speak our minds out—and nothing to hinder us. That will be unique—that will be something new in magazines. We'll go the limit, mother."

His mother laughed.

"I guess you're right, Joe. It's worth trying. But how are you going to circulate the paper?"

"How?" Again his mind jumped forward. "House-to-house canvass—labor unions—street corners. I'm going to dig in now, get acquainted with the people round about, spread it any old way. And I'm going to start with the idea of a big future—twenty thousand copies finally. You see, it 'll be a sort of underground newspaper—no publicity—but spreading from group to group

among the workers. Broadway and up-town will never see a copy."

So the new life started, started in full swing. Joe worked late that very night putting his plans on paper, and the next morning there was plenty of activity for everybody. Joe bought a rebuilt cylinder press for fifteen hundred dollars and had it installed in the basement. Then he had the basement wired, and got an electric motor to furnish the power. John Rann and his family were moved down to a flat farther west on Tenth Street, and a feeder, a compositor, and a make-up man were hired along with him. In the press-room (the basement) was placed a stone—a marble-top table—whereon the make-up man could take the strips of type as they came from the compositors, arrange them into pages, and "lock them up" in the forms, ready to put on the presses.

Then Joe arranged with a printery to set up the type weekly; with a bindery to bind, fold, bundle, and address the papers; and with Patrick Flynn, truckman, to distribute the papers to newsdealers.

Next Joe made a tour of the neighborhood, spoke with the newsdealers, told them that all they would have to do was to deliver the papers to the addresses printed upon them. He found them willing to thus add to their income.

Thus he made ready. But he was not yet prepared to get subscriptions (one dollar a year or

twenty-five cents a quarter), feeling that first he must have a sample paper to show.

The labor on that first number was a joy to him. He would jump up in the middle of the night, rush into the office, light the gas, and get to work in his nightgown. He was at it at all hours. And it proved to be an enormous task. Eight pages eight by twelve do not read like a lot, but they write like a very great deal. There was an editorial, "Greetings to You," in which Joe set forth in plain words the ideas and ideals of the paper, and in which he made clear the meaning of the phrase "nine-tenths." Then he found that there were two great strikes in progress in the city. This amazed him, as there was no visible sign of such a condition. The newspapers said nothing of it, and peace seemed to brood over the city's millions. Yet there were thousands of cloak-makers out, and over in Brooklyn the toilers in the sugar refineries were having little pitched battles with strike-breakers in the streets. Three men had been killed and a score wounded.

Joe dug into these strikes, called at the union headquarters, spoke with the men, even called on some of the cloak-makers' bosses and learned their grievances. Then he wrote accounts of the strike without taking sides, merely reporting the facts as fairly as he could.

In this way, and with the aid of clippings, and by printing that poem by Lowell which was his

mother's favorite, wherein was the couplet already quoted,

> "They are slaves who dare not be
> In the right with two or three,"

he made up a hodge-podge of a magazine.

Up in the corner of the editorial page he ran the following, subject to change:

THE NINE-TENTHS

A WEEKLY WORD ABOUT MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN

MY MOTTO

I ACCEPT LIFE LARGELY, BUT NOT IN DETAILS

SOME OF THE DETAILS NOT ACCEPTED

ARE

Anything that prevents a child from being well born and from fulfilling its possibilities.

Anything that prevents a woman or man from using every good side of her or his nature.

ABOUT THESE DETAILS NO DOUBT:

DISEASE	EXCESS
WANT	OVERWORK

CHILD LABOR

And let's avoid jealousy, quarrels, ridicule, meanness, and the rest of the mosquito things.

Otherwise: what a glorious world.

This didn't please him altogether, but he wanted to be definite and simple, and he wanted to show that he wasn't a narrow partisan.

Thus the first number came to be. As he turned it out, Billy rushed it in batches to the compositors, and when finally it all came back in strips of type, it was hurried down to the idlers in the basement. At ten-thirty that chilly, dust-blowing morning, when the sun-stricken air glittered with eddies of motes, Joe, sitting at his desk, had the exquisite rapture of feeling the building tremble.

He rushed to his mother, and exulted.

"Can't you feel the press going? Listen!"

Truly the new life had begun—the vision was beginning to crystallize in daily living.

"We're in the fight now, mother!" he cried. "There's something doing!"

And later, when Joe stood at the back of the press and that first complete sheet came through, he picked it up as if it were a new-born child, as indeed it was, wet, drippy, forlorn, and weird, and yet a wonder and a miracle. Joe looked on his own creation—the little sheets—the big, black *The Nine-Tenths*—the clear, good type. He was awed and reduced almost to tears.

He mailed a copy to Myra with a brief note:

DEAR MYRA,—Here's the answer to your question. I'm doing the inclosed, and doing it in West Tenth Street. Do you know the neighborhood? Old Green-

wich Village, red, shabby, shoddy, common, and vulgar. Mother and I are as happy as children. How are you? Your letter is splendid. I am sure you will come to understand. When are you returning to New York?

As ever,

JOE BLAINE.

And he thought, "Now I have something to show Sally Heffer!"

III

OTHERS: AND SALLY HEFFER

JOE filled a stiff cloth portfolio with a batch of $^{9}/_{10s}$ (abbreviation for home use), pulled his gray hat over his bushy hair, and went over and tapped the collapsible Slate on the shoulder.

"Yes, Mr. Joe."

"Nathan," cried Joe, excitedly, "if there's a rush of subscribers while I'm gone, make 'em stand in line, and each wait his turn. But don't let them block the car tracks—string 'em around the corner."

Nathan gazed at Joe like a lost soul.

"But I think, Mr. Joe," he said, slowly, "you place your hopes too high. I don't like to be too gloomy, Mr. Joe, but I have my doubts about a rush."

"Slate," cried Joe, slapping the tragic bookkeeper a whack, "you're inspiring!"

And he swung out to the street in the brilliant morning sunshine, ready to begin his canvass.

"Next door," he mused, "is the place to start."

There was a woman sitting on the stoop, a two-

year-old girl in her arms. Joe paused and looked at the baby.

"Hello, you."

The baby looked at him a little doubtfully, and then laughed.

"Girl or boy?" asked Joe of the mother.

"Girl."

"How old?"

"Two."

"She's a darling! What's her name?"

"Name's Annie."

"Named after you?"

"Sure!"

"You wouldn't mind if I gave her a peppermint to suck?"

"Would you mind some candy, Annie?"

"*Candy!*" shrieked the child.

Joe dove into his bulging pocket and produced a good hard white one. Annie snatched it up and sucked joyously.

"Thank the man, Annie."

"Thank you."

"Is this your only one, Mrs. —"

"Cassidy's my name! No, I've buried two others."

"From this house?"

"No, we keep movin'—" Mrs. Cassidy laughed a little.

Joe made a grim face.

"Jump your rent, eh?"

Mrs. Cassidy shrugged her shoulders.

"What can poor people do?"

"But hasn't Mr. Cassidy a job?"

"He has when he has it—but it's bum work. Slave like a nigger and then laid off for six months, maybe."

"What kind of work is that?"

"'Longshore—he's a 'longshoreman."

"And when he's unemployed you have a hard time, don't you?"

"Hard?" Mrs. Cassidy's voice broke. "What can we do? There's the insurance every week—fifteen cents for my man, ten cents for me, and five cents for Annie. We couldn't let that go; it's buryin'-money, and there ain't a Cassidy isn't going to have as swell a funeral as any in the ward. And then we've got to live. I've found one thing in this world—the harder you work the less you get."

Joe spoke emphatically.

"Mrs. Cassidy, when your husband's out of work, through no fault of his own, he ought to get a weekly allowance to keep you going."

"And who's to give it to him?"

"Who? Do you know what they do in Germany?"

"What do they do in Germany?"

"They have insurance for the unemployed, and when a man's out he gets so-and-so-much a week. We ought to have it in America."

"How can we get it? Who listens to the poor?"

"Your man belongs to a union, doesn't he?"

"Sure!"

"Well, the trouble is our people here don't know these things. If they knew them, they'd get together and make the bosses come round. It's ignorance holding us all back."

"I've often told Tim he ought to study something. There's grand lectures in the schools every Tuesday and Thursday night. But Tim don't put stock in learning. He says learning never bought a glass of beer.

Joe laughed.

"Mrs. Cassidy, that's not what I mean. Listen. I'm a neighbor of yours—live next door—"

"Sure! Didn't I see you move in? When my friend, Mrs. Leupp, seen your iron beds, she up and went to Macy's and bought one herself. What yer doing in there, anyway, with that printing-press? It gives me the trembles."

Joe laughed heartily.

"You feel the press in this house?"

"First time, I thought it was an earthquake, Mr. Blaine."

Joe was abashed.

"How'd you know my name?"

"Ast it off your landlady."

"Well, you're wrong—I'm Mr. Joe."

Mrs. Cassidy was hugely amused.

"You're one grand fellow, let me tell you. But, oh, that black, thin one—he's creepy, Mr.

Joe. But your mother—she's all right. I was telling Mrs. Rann so myself."

Joe sighed tragically.

"I suppose the whole neighborhood knows all my family secrets."

"Pretty near," laughed Mrs. Cassidy.

"Well, there's one thing you didn't know."

"What's that?"

"About my newspaper."

"What about it?"

"What paper do you take?"

Mrs. Cassidy mentioned a daily penny paper.

"Let's see," said Joe, "that's eleven cents a week, isn't it? Will you spend two cents more, and take *The Nine-Tenths?*"

"*Yours?*"

"It's a paper that tells about the rich and the poor, and what the poor ought to do to get more out of life. Here, take this copy, keep it; make Tim read it."

Mrs. Cassidy was handed a neat little sheet, eight by twelve inches, clearly printed. There was something homely and inviting about it, something hospitable and honest. The woman fingered it curiously.

"Ain't it cute?" she cried.

"It's all written for just such people as you, and I want you to take it."

"How much is it?"

"Well, you pay twenty-five cents and get it for three months, once a week, and let Tim read

it out loud. Say, don't you think Annie'd like to see the printing-press?"

"'Deed she would!"

And then Joe did the one thing that won. He seized up little Annie himself, and bore her down to the press-room, Mrs. Cassidy following, and mentally concluding that there was no one in the ward like Mr. Joe.

Result: first subscription, and Joe elated with victory. All of which shows, it must be confessed, that Joe was considerable of a politician, and did not hesitate to adopt the methods of Tammany Hall.

It was the next day, at a street corner, that, quite accidentally, Joe met Michael Dunan, truckman.

"I've got a cigar," said Joe, "but I haven't a match."

"I've got a match," said Michael, easily, "but I haven't a cigar."

"My name's Joe Blaine," said Joe, handing over a panetela.

"Mine's Mike Dunan," said Michael, passing a match.

They lit up together.

"The drinks are on me," murmured Michael.

They stepped into the saloon at the corner—a bright, mirrory place, whose tiled floor was covered with sawdust, and whose bar shone like mahogany.

"Two beers, Donovan."

"Dark or light, Mike?"

"Dark."

They drank. Michael pounded the bar.

"Joe Blaine, the times are hard."

"How so, Michael?"

"The rich are too rich, and the poor too poor. I'm tired of it!"

"Then look this over."

Michael looked it over, and bubbled with joy.

"That's great. Did you spiel it out? Did you say this little piece? Joe, I want to join your union!"

Joe laughed; he sized up the little man, with his sparkling eyes, his open face, his fiery, musical voice, his golden hair. And he had an inspiration.

"Mike," he said, "I'm getting out this paper up the street. Have a press there and an office. Run in and see my mother. If you like her, tell me, and you can join the Stove Circle."

"And what may the Stove Circle be?"

"The get-together club—my advisory board."

"I'm on."

"See here, you," said a blunt, biting, deep-chested voice at their side. "Let me get a look."

Joe turned and met Oscar Heming, delicatessen man, stumpy, bull-necked, with fierce bristling mustache, and clothes much too big for him. He was made a member at once of the Stove Circle.

That same evening Joe went down three steps into a little, low, cigar store, whose gas-blazing atmosphere reeked with raw and damp tobacco. He stepped up to the dusty counter.

"What's your best?"

The proprietor, a wise little owl of a man, with thin black hair, and untidy spade beard, and big round glasses enlarging his big brown eyes, placed a box before him.

"My own make—Underdogs—clear Havana—six cents apiece."

"I like the name. Give me ten. But explain!"

"Well"—Nathan Latsky (for so he proved to be) shrugged his shoulders—"I'm one myself. But—what's in a name?"

"He's a red revolutionist!" said a voice, and Joe, turning, noticed two men leaning beside him at the counter; one, a fine and fiery Jew, handsome, dark, young; the other, a large and gentle Italian, with pallid features, dark hair sprinkled with gray, and a general air of largeness and leadership about him. The Jew had spoken.

"Why a red?" asked Joe.

"Oh," said Latsky, quietly, "I come from Russia, you know!"

"Well, I'm a revolutionist myself," said Joe. "But I haven't any color yet."

"Union man?" asked the Italian.

"Not exactly. I run a radical newspaper."

"What's the name of it?" asked the Jew.

"*The Nine-Tenths.*"

The words worked magic. They were all eagerness, and exchanged names. Thus Joe came to know Jacob Izon and Salvatore Giotto and Nathan Latsky. He was greatly interested in Izon, the facts of whose life he soon came to know. Izon was a designer, working at Marrin's, the shirtwaist manufacturer; he made thirty dollars a week, had a wife and two children, and was studying engineering in a night school. He and his wife had come from Russia, where they had been revolutionists.

The three men examined the paper closely.

"That's what we need," said Izon. "You must let us help to spread it!"

Joe added the three to the Stove Circle.

He went to Giotto's house with him, up to the sixth floor of a tenement, and met the Italian's neat, dark-eyed wife, and looked in on the three sleeping children. Then under the blazing gas in the crowded room, with its cheap, frail, shiny furniture, its crayons on the wall, its crockery and cheap clocks, and with the noise of the city's night rising all about them, the two big men talked together. Joe was immensely interested. The Italian was large-hearted, open-minded, big in body and soul, and spoke quaintly, but thoughtfully.

"Tell me about yourself," said Joe.

Giotto spread out the palms of his hands.

"What to tell? I get a good education in the

old country—but not much spik English—better read, better write it. I try hard to learn. Come over here, and education no good. Nobody want Italian educated man. So worked on Italian paper—go round and see the poor—many tragedies, many—like the theater. Write a novel, a romance, about the poor. Wish I could write it in English."

"Good work," cried Joe. "Then what did you do?"

Giotto laughed.

"Imported the wine—got broke—open the saloon. Toughs come there, thieves, to swindle the immigrants. Awfully slick. No good to warn immigrants—they lose all their money. Come in crying. What can I do? I get after the bums and they say, 'Giotto no good; we will kill him.' Then I get broke again. Go to West Virginia and work in the coal-mine—break my leg. And that was the baddest place in the world."

"The mine?"

"And the town. Laborers—Italian, nigger; saloons and politics—Jews; bosses all Irish—nothing but the saloons and the women to spenda the money. Company own everything—stores, saloons, women. Pay you the money and get it all back. Every day a man killed. Hell!"

"Then where did you go?"

"Chicago—printing—anything to do I could get. Sometimes make forty cents a day. Little.

Have to feed and work for wife and three children. I try and try. Hod-carrier"—Giotto laughed at the memory—"press coats—anything. Then come back here."

"And what are you doing now?"

"I try to make labor union with Italians. Hard work. Italians live like pigs—ignorant—not—not *social*. Down-stairs live a Calabria man, makes ice-cream—got four rooms—in the four rooms man, wife, mother, five children, fifteen boarders—"

"Go on!" cried Joe. "Why do you stop?"

Giotto laughed.

"So maybe your paper help. Many Italians read English. I make them read your paper, Mr. Joe."

It was not until nearly the end of the week that Joe sought out Sally Heffer. Though every day he meditated stepping down that narrow red side street, each time he had felt unprepared, throbbingly incapable; but this evening as he finished his work and was on the way home it seemed that beyond his own volition he suddenly swerved at her corner, hurried down the lamp-lit pave, searched out the faded number in the meager light, mounted the stoop, and pushed open the unlocked door.

He was very weary—heart-sick and foot-sore—as he climbed the dark steps of the three-story house. He felt pent in the vast pulsations of life

about him—a feeling of impossibility, of a task greater than he could bear. He simply had to see the young woman who was responsible for sending him here. He had a vivid mental image of her tragic loveliness, of how she had stepped back and forth before him and suddenly put her hands to her face and wept, of how she had divined his suffering, and impulsively seized his hand, and whispered, "I have faith in you." He expected a sort of self-illumined Joan of Arc with eyes that saw visions, with spirit flaming. And even in the dark top-floor hallway he was awed, and almost afraid.

Then in the blackness, his eyes on the thread of light beneath the rear door, he advanced, reached up his hand, and knocked.

There came, somehow surprising him, a definite, clear-edged voice:

"Come in!"

He opened the door, which swung just free of the narrow cot. Just beyond, Sally Heffer was writing at a little table, and the globed gas burned above her, lighting the thin gold of her sparse hair. She turned her face to him quite casually, the same pallid, rounded face, the same broad forehead and gray eyes, of remarkable clarity—eyes that were as clear windows allowing one to peer in. And she was dressed in a white shirtwaist and the same brown skirt, and over a hook, behind her, hung the same brown coat. Yet Joe was shocked. This was not the

Sally Heffer of his dreams—but rather a refreshing, forceful, dynamic young woman, brimming over with the joy of life. And even in that flash of strangeness he sensed the fact that at the time he had met her she was merely the voice of a vast insurgent spirit, merely the instrument of a great event. This was the every-day Sally, a quite livable, lovable human being, healthy, free in her actions, pulsing with the life about her. The very words she used were of a different order.

And as she casually glanced around she began to stare, her eyes lit with wonder, and she arose, exclaiming:

"Mr.—*Blaine!*"

At the sound of her voice the tension snapped within him; he felt common and homely again; he felt comfortable and warm; and he smiled wearily.

"Yes," he said, "I'm here."

She came close to him, more and more incredulous, and the air became electric.

"But what brings you here?"

"I live here—West Tenth."

"*Live* here? Why?"

Her eyes seemed to search through his.

"You made me," he murmured.

She smiled strangely.

"*That night?*"

"Yes."

Impulsively her hand went out, and he clasped

it . . . her hand seemed almost frozen. Tears of humility sprang to her eyes.

"I was high and mighty that night, . . . but I couldn't help it. . . . But you . . . do you realize what a wonderful thing you've done?"

He laughed awkwardly.

"Yes, here's what I've done"—he handed her a copy of *The Nine-Tenths*—"and it's very wonderful."

She gave a strange, short laugh again—excitement, exultation—and held the paper as if it were a living thing.

"This . . . *The Nine-Tenths* . . . oh! . . . for the working people. . . . Let me see!"

She went to the light, spread the paper and eagerly read. Then she glanced back a moment and saw his worn face and the weary droop of his back.

"Say—you're dead tired. Sit down. You don't mind the bed, do you?"

He smiled softly.

"I don't! I am pretty much done up." And he sank down, and let his hands droop between his knees.

Sally read, and then suddenly turned to him.

"This editorial is—it's just a ripper."

The author felt the thrill of a creator. She went on:

"I wish every working-girl in New York could read this."

"So do I."

She turned and looked at him, more and more excited.

"So *this* is what you're doing. I must pinch myself—it's all a dream! Too good to be true."

Suddenly there seemed to be a reversal in their relationships. Before, his end of the beam was down, hers up. But subtly in her voice he felt the swing to the other extreme. She had set him in a realm above herself.

"Tell me," she said, "just how you came to go into this."

He told her a little, and as he spoke he became thoroughly at his ease with her, as if she were a man, and in the pleasure of their swift comradeship they could laugh at each other.

"Mr. Blaine," she said, suddenly, "if I got you into this, it's up to me to help you win. I'm going to turn into an agent for you—I'll make 'em subscribe right and left."

Joe laughed at her.

"Lordy, if you knew how good it is to hear this—after tramping up three miles of stairs and more and nabbing a tawdry twenty subscriptions."

"Is that all you got?"

"People don't understand."

"We'll *make* them!" cried Sally, clenching her fist.

Joe laughed warmly; he was delighted with her.

"Are you working here?" he asked.

"Yes—you know I used to be in Newark—I

COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS
LIBRARY

was the president of the Newark Hat-Trimmers' Union."

"And now?"

"I'm trying to organize the girls here."

"Well," he muttered, grimly. "I wouldn't like to be your boss, Miss Heffer."

She laughed in her low voice.

"Let me tell you what sort I am!" And she sat down, crossed her legs, and clasped her hands on her raised knee. "I was working in that Newark factory, and the girls told me to ask the boss, Mr. Plump, for a half holiday. So I went into his office and said: 'Mr. Plump, the girls want a half holiday.' He was very angry. He said: 'You won't get it. Mind your own business.' So I said, quietly: 'All right, Mr. Plump, we'll take a *whole* holiday. We won't show up Monday.' Then he said to me, 'Sally Heffer, go to hell!' He was the first man to say such a thing to my face. Well, one of the girls found me in the hall drying my eyes, and when she got the facts she went back and told the others, and the bunch walked out, leaving this message: 'Mr. Plump, we won't come back till you apologize to Sally.' Well, we were out a week, and what do you think?" Sally laughed with quiet joy. "Plump took it to the Manufacturers Association, and they—backed him? Not a bit! *Made him apologize!*"

Joe chuckled.

"Great! Great!"

"Oh, I'm doing things all the time," said Sally. "Organized the Jewish hat-trimmers in Newark, and all my friends went back on me for sticking up for the Jews. Did I care? Ten years ago every time the men got a raise through their union, the girls had their salaries cut. Different now. We've enough sense to give the easy jobs to the old ladies—and there's lots of old ones trimming hats."

"What's trimming hats?"

Sally plucked up Joe's gray hat, and then looked at Joe, her eyes twinkling.

"It's a little hard to show you on this. But see the sweat-band? It has a lot of needle holes in it, and the trimmer has to stitch through those holes and then sew the band on to the hat, and all the odds and ends. It kills eyes. What do you think?" she went on. "The girls used to drink beer—bosses let 'em do it to keep them stimulated—and it's ruined lots. I stopped that."

Joe looked at Sally. And he had a wild impulse then, a crazy thought.

"How much do you get a week?"

"Fifteen."

"Well," said Joe, "I want a woman's department in the paper. Will you handle it for fifteen a week?"

"But you don't know me!"

"Well," said Joe, "I'm willing to gamble on you."

Sally's low voice loosed exultation.

"You're a wonder, Mr. Blaine. I'll *do it!* But we're both plumb crazy."

"I know it," said Joe, "and I like it!"

They shook hands.

"Come over to-morrow and meet my mother!" He gave her the address.

"Good-by," she said. "And let me tell you, I'm simply primed for woman stuff. It is the women"—she repeated the phrase slowly—"it is the women, as you'll find, who bear the burden of the world! Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

He went down into the open air exulting.

He could not overcome his astonishment. She was so different than he had anticipated, so much more human and simple; so much more easy to fit into the every-day shake-up of life, and full of that divine allowance for other people's shortcomings. It was impossible to act the tragedian before her. And, most wondrous of all, she was a "live wire." He had gone to her abasing himself; he came away as her employer, subtly cheered, encouraged, and lifted to new heights of vivid enterprise.

"Sally Heffer!" he kept repeating. "Isn't she a marvel! And, miracle of miracles, she is going to swing the great work with me!"

And so the Stove Circle was founded with Sally Heffer, Michael Dunan, Oscar Heming, Nathan Latsky, Salvatore Giotto, and Jacob Izon. Its members met together a fortnight later on a cold

wintry night. The stove was red-hot, the circle drew about it on their kitchen chairs, and Joe spent the first meeting in going over his plans for the paper. There were many invaluable practical comments—especially on how to get news and what news to get—and each member was delegated to see to one department. Latsky and Giotto took immigration, Dunan took politics and the Irish, Heming took the East Side, Izon, foreign news, and Sally Heffer took workwomen. Thereafter each one in his way visited labor unions, clubs, and societies and got each group to pledge itself to send in news. They helped, too, to get subscriptions—both among their friends and in the unions. In this way Joe founded his paper. He never repeated the personal struggle of that first week, for he now had an enthusiastic following to spread the work for him—men and a woman, every one of whom had access to large bodies of people and was an authority in his own world.

But that wonderful week was never forgotten by Joe. Each day he had risen early and gone forth and worked till late at night, making a canvass in good earnest. House after house he penetrated, knocking at doors, inquiring for a mythical Mrs. (or Mr.) Parsons (this to hush the almost universal fear that he had come to collect the rent or the instalment on the furniture or clothes of the family). In this way he started conversation. He found first that the immediate neighborhood

knew him already. And he found many other things. He found rooms tidy, exquisite in their cleanliness and good taste of arrangement; and then other rooms slovenly and filthy. He found young wives just risen from bed, chewing gum and reading the department-store advertisements in the paper, their hair in curl-papers. He found fat women hanging out of windows, their dishes unwashed, their beds unmade, their floors unswept. He found men sick in bed, and managed to sit down at their side and give them an interesting twenty minutes. He found other men, out of work, smoking and reading. He found one Italian family making "willow plumes" in two narrow rooms—one a bedroom, the other a kitchen—every one at work, twisting the strands of feathers to make a swaying plume—every one, including the grandmother and little dirty tots of four and six—and every one of them cross-eyed as a result of the terrific work. He found one dark cellar full of girls twisting flowers; and one attic where, in foul, steaming air, a Jewish family were "finishing" garments—the whole place stacked with huge bundles which had been given out to them by the manufacturer. He found one home where an Italian "count" was the husband of an Irish girl, and the girl told him how she had been led into the marriage by the man's promise of title and castle in Venice, only to bring her from Chicago to New York and confess that he was a poor laborer.

"But I made the best of it," she cried. "I put down my foot, hustled him out to work, and we've done well ever since. I've been knocking the dago out of him as hard as I can hit!"

"You're ambitious," said Joe.

"My! I'd give my hands for education!"

Joe prescribed *The Nine-Tenths*.

Everywhere he invited people to call—"drop over"—and see his plant and meet his mother. Even the strange specimen of white woman who had married a negro and was proud of it.

"Daniel's black outside, but there's many stuck-up women I know whose white man is black *inside*."

Absorbingly interesting was the quest—opening up one vista of life after another. Joe gained a moving-picture knowledge of life—saw flashed before him dramatic scene after scene, destiny after destiny—squalor, ignorance, crime, neatness, ambition, thrift, respectability. He never forgot the shabby dark back room where under gas-light a frail, fine woman was sewing ceaselessly, one child sick in a tumble-down bed, and two others playing on the floor.

"I'm all alone in the world," she said. "And all I make is two hundred and fifty dollars a year—less than five dollars a week—to keep four people."

Joe put her on the free list.

He learned many facts, vital elements in his history.

For instance, that on less than eight hundred dollars a year no family of five (the average family) could live decently, and that nearly half the people he met had less, and the rest not much more. That, as a rule, there were three rooms for five people; and many of the families gathered their fuel on the street; that many had no gas—used oil and wood; that many families spent about twenty-five cents a day for food; that few clothes were bought, and these mainly from the instalment man and second hand at that; that many were recipients of help; and that recreation and education were everywhere reduced to the lowest terms. That is, boys and girls were hustled to work at twelve by giving their age as fourteen, and recreation meant an outing a year to Coney Island, and beer, and, once in a while, the nickel theater; that there were practically no savings. And there was one conclusion he could not evade—namely, that while overcrowding, improvidence, extravagance, and vice explained the misery of some families, yet there were limits. For instance:

On Manhattan Island no adequate housing can be obtained at less than twelve or fourteen dollars a month.

That there is no health in a diet of bread and tea.

That—curious facts!—coal burns up, coats and shoes wear out in spite of mending.

That the average housewife cannot take time

to go bargain-hunting or experimenting with new food combinations, or in making or mending garments, and neither has she the ability nor training to do so.

That, in fact, the poor, largely speaking, were between the upper and nether millstones of low wages and high prices.

Of course there was the vice, but while drink causes poverty, poverty causes drink. Joe found intemperance among women; he found little children running to the saloon for cans of beer; he found plenty of men drunkards. But what things to offset these! The woman who bought three bushels of coal a week for seventy-five cents, watched her fires, picked out the half-burned pieces, reused them, and wasted no heat; the children foraging the streets for kindling-wood; the family in bed to keep warm; the wife whose husband had pawned her wedding-ring for drink, and who had bought a ten-cent brass one, "to keep the respect of her children"; the man working for ten dollars a week, who once had owned his own saloon, but, so he said, "it was impossible to make money out of a saloon unless I put in gambling-machines or women, and I wouldn't stand for it"; the woman whose husband was a drunkard, and who, therefore, went to the Battery 5 A.M. to 10, then 5 P.M. to 7, every day to do scrubbing for twenty dollars a month; the wonderful Jewish family whose income was seven hundred and ninety-seven dol-

lars and who yet contrived to save one hundred and twenty-three dollars a year to later send their two boys to Columbia University.

And everywhere he found the miracle of miracles: the spirit of charity and mutual helpfulness—the poor aiding the poorer; the exquisite devotion of mothers to children; the courage that braved a terrible life.

For a week the canvass went on. Joe worked feverishly, and came home late at night too tired almost to undress himself. Again and again he exclaimed to his mother:

"I never dreamed of such things! I never dreamed of such poverty! I never dreamed of such human nature!"

Greenwich Village, hitherto a shabby red clutter of streets, uninviting, forbidding, dull, squalid, became for Joe the very swarm and drama and warm-blooded life of humanity. He began to sense the fact that he was in the center of a human whirlpool, in the center of beauty and ugliness, love and bitterness, misery and joy. The whole neighborhood began to palpitate for him; the stone walls seemed bloody with struggling souls; the pavements stamped with the steps of a battle.

"What can I do," he kept thinking, "with these people?"

And to his amazement he began to see that just as up-town offered the rivals of luxury, pleasure, and ease, so down-town offered the rivals of in-

temperance, grinding poverty, ignorance. His theories were beginning to meet the shock of facts.

"How move them? How touch them off?" he asked himself.

But the absorbing interest—the faces—the shadowy scenes — the gas-lit interiors — everywhere human beings, everywhere life, packed, crowded, evolving.

At the end of the week he stopped, though the fever was still on him. He had gained two hundred and fifty subscribers; he had distributed twelve hundred copies of the paper. He now felt that he could delay no longer in bringing out the next number. So he sat down, and, with Sally Heffer's words ringing in his mind, he wrote his famous editorial, "It is the Women":

It is the women who bear the burden of this world—the poor women. Perhaps they have beauty when they marry. Then they plunge into drudgery. All day and night they are in dark and damp rooms, scrubbing, washing, cooking, cleaning, sewing. They wear the cheapest clothes—thin calico wrappers. They take their husbands' thin pay-envelopes, and manage the finances. They stint and save—they buy one carrot at a time, one egg. When rent-week comes—and it comes twice a month—they cut the food by half to pay for housing. They are underfed, they are denied everything but toil—save *love*. Child after child they bear. The toil increases, the stint is sharper, the worry infinite. Now they must clothe their children, feed them, dress them, wash them, amuse them. They must endure the heart-sickness of seeing a child

underfed. They must fight the demons of disease. Possibly they must stop a moment in the speed of their labor and face death. Only for a moment! Need calls them: mouths ask for food, floors for the broom, and the pay-envelope for keen reckonings. Possibly then the husband will begin to drink—possibly he will come home and beat his wife, drag her about the floor, blacken her eyes, break a rib. The next day the task is taken up again—the man is fed, the children clothed, the food marketed, the floor scrubbed, the dress sewn. And then as the family grows there come hard times. The man is out of work—he wants to work but cannot. Rent and the butcher and grocer must be paid, but there are no wages brought home. The woman takes in washing. She goes through the streets to the more prosperous and drags home a basket of soiled clothes. The burden of life grows heavier—the husband becomes accustomed to the changed relationships. Very often he ceases to be a wage-earner and loafs about saloons. From then on the woman wrestles with worlds of trouble—unimaginable difficulties. Truly, running a state may be easier than running a family. And yet the woman toils on; she does not complain; she sets three meals each day before husband and children; she sees that they have clothes; she gives the man his drink money; she endures his cruelty; she plans ambitiously for her children. Or possibly the man begins to work again, and then one day is killed in an accident. There is danger of the family breaking up. But the woman rises to the crisis and works miracles. She keeps her head; she takes charge; she toils late into the night; she goes without food, without sleep. Somehow she manages. There was a seamstress in Greenwich Village who pulled her family of three and herself along on two hundred and fifty dollars a year—less than five dollars a week!

If luck is with the woman the children grow up, go to

work, and for a time ease the burden. But then, what is left? The woman is prematurely old—her hair is gray, her face drawn and wrinkled, or flabby and soiled, her back bent, her hands raw and red and big. Beauty has gone, and with the years of drudgery, much of the over-glory, much of the finer elements of love and joy, have vanished. Her mind is absorbed by little things—details of the day. She has ceased to attend church, she has not stepped beyond the street corner for years, she has not read or played or rested. Much is dead in her. Love only is left. Love of a man, love of children. She is a fierce mother and wife, as of old. And she knows the depth of sorrow and the truth of pain.

He repeated his programme. Perhaps—he afterward thought so himself—this editorial was a bit too pessimistic. But he had to write it—had to ease his soul. He set it off, however, by a lovely little paragraph which he printed boxed. Here it is:

Possibly much of the laughter heard on this planet comes from the mothers and fathers who are thinking or talking of the children.

In this way, then, Joe entered into the life of the people.

IV

OTHERS: AND THEODORE MARRIN

JOE became a familiar figure in Greenwich Village. As time went on, and issue after issue of *The Nine-Tenths* appeared, he became known to the whole district. Whenever he went out people nodded right and left, passed the time of day with him, or stopped him for a hand-shake and a question. He would, when matters were not pressing, pause at a stoop to speak with mothers, and people in trouble soon began to acquire a habit of dropping in at his office to talk things over with the "Old Man."

If it was a matter of employment, he turned the case over to some member of the Stove Circle; if it was a question of honest want, he drew on the "sinking-fund" and took a note payable in sixty days—a most elastic note, always secretly renewable; if it was an idle beggar, a vagrant, he made short work of his visitor. Such a visitor was Lady Hickory. Billy was at his little table next the door; over in the corner the still-despondent Slate was still collapsing; at the east window sat Editor Sally Heffer, digging into a mass of notes; and near

the west, at the roll-top desk, a visitor's chair set out invitingly beside him, Joe was writing—a weird exercise of muttering softly, so as not to disturb the rest, and then scratching down a sentence.

Billy leaped up to receive her ladyship, who fatly rolled in, her tarnished hat askew, her torn thrice-dingy silks clutched up in one fat hand.

Lady Hickory gave one cry:

"There he is!"

She pushed Billy aside and rolled over into the visitor's chair.

"Oh, Mr. Joe!"

Joe turned.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Everything's up—I'm dying, Mr. Joe—I need help—I must get to the hospital—"

"Sick?"

"Gallopin' consumption!"

Joe sniffed.

"It doesn't smell like consumption," he said with a sigh. "It smells like rum!"

He hustled her out rather roughly, Nathan Slate regarding him with mournful round eyes. Twenty minutes later Nathan came over and sat down.

"Mr. Joe."

"Yes, Nathan."

"There's something troubles my conscience, Mr. Joe."

"Let her rip!"

"Mr. Joe—"

"I'm waiting!"

Nathan cleared his throat.

"You say you're a democrat, Mr. Joe, and you're always saying, 'Love thy neighbor,' Mr. Joe."

"Has *that* hit you, Nathan?"

Nathan unburdened, evading this thrust.

"Why, then, Mr. Joe, did you turn that woman away?"

Joe was delighted.

"Why? I'll tell you! Suppose that I know that the cucumber is inherently as good as any other vegetable, does that say I can digest it? Cucumbers aren't for me, Nathan—especially decayed ones."

Nathan stared at him disconsolately, shook his head, and went back to puzzle it out. It is doubtful, however, that he ever did so.

Besides such visitors, there were still others who came to him to arbitrate family disputes—which constituted him a sort of Domestic Relations Court—and gave him an insight into a condition that surprised him. Namely, the not uncommon cases of secret polygamy and polyandry.

In short, Joe was busy. His work was established in a flexible routine—mornings for writing; afternoons for callers, for circulation work, and for special trips to centers of labor trouble; evenings for going about with Giotto to see the Ital-

ians, or paying a visit, say, to the Ranns, or some others, or meeting at Latsky's cigar store with a group of revolutionists who filled the air with their war of the classes, their socialist state, their dreams of millennium.

He gave time, too, to his mother—evening walks, evening talks, and old-fashioned quiet hours in the kitchen, his mother at her needlework, and he reading beside her. One such night, when his mother seemed somewhat fatigued, he said to her:

"Don't sew any more, mother."

"But it soothes me, Joe."

"Mother!"

"Yes."

Joe spoke awkwardly.

"Are you perfectly satisfied down here? Did we do the right thing?"

His mother's eyes flashed, as of old.

"We did," she cried in her youthful voice. "It's real—it's absorbing. And I'm very proud of myself."

"Proud? You?"

"Yes, proud!" she laughed. "Joe, when a woman reaches my age she has a right to be proud if young folks seek her out and talk with her and make her their confidante. It shows she's not a useless incumbrance, but young!"

Joe sat up.

"Have they found you out? Do they come to you?"

"They do—especially the young wives with their troubles. All of them troubled over their husbands and their children. We have the finest talks together. They're a splendid lot!"

"Who's come, in particular?"

"Well, there's one who isn't married—one of the best of them."

"Not Sally Heffer!"

"The same!"

"I'm dinged!"

"That girl," said Joe's mother, "has all sorts of possibilities—and she's brave and strong and true. Sally's a wonder! a new kind of woman!"

A new kind of woman! Joe remembered the phrase, and in the end admitted that it was true. Sally was of the new breed; she represented the new emancipation; the exodus of woman from the home to the battle-fields of the world; the willingness to fight in the open, shoulder to shoulder with men; the advance of a sex that now demanded a broader, freer life, a new health, a home built up on comradeship and economic freedom. In all of these things she contrasted sharply with Myra, and Joe always thought of the two together.

But unconsciously Sally was always the fellow-worker—Myra—what Myra meant he could feel but not explain; yet these crowded days left little time for thoughts sweet but often intense with pain. He wrote to her rarely—mere jottings of business and health; he rarely heard

from her. Her message was invariably the same—the richness and quiet of country life, the depth and peace of rest, the hope that he was well and happy. She never mentioned his paper —though she received every number—and when Joe inquired once whether it came, she answered in a postscript: "The paper? It's in every Monday's mail." This neglect irritated Joe, and he would doubly enjoy Sally's heart-and-soul passion for *The Nine-Tenths*.

Sally was growing into his working life, day by day. Her presence was stimulating, refreshing. If he felt blue and discouraged, or dried up and in want of inspiration, he merely called her over, and her quiet talk, her sane views, her quick thinking, her never-failing good humor and faith, acted upon him as a tonic.

"Miss Sally," he said once, "what would I ever do without you?"

Sally looked at him with her clear eyes.

"Oh," she said, "I guess you'd manage to stagger along somehow."

But after that she hovered about him like a guardian angel. What bothered her chiefly, when she thought of Joe's work, was her lack of education, and she set about to make this up by good reading, and by attending lectures at night, and by hard study in such time as she could snatch from her work. She and Joe were comrades in the best sense. They could always depend upon each other. It was in some ways as if they were

in partnership. And then there was that old tie of the fire to draw them together.

She was of great help in setting him right about the poor.

"People are happy," she would say—"most people are happy. Human nature is bigger than environment—it bubbles up through mud. That's almost the trouble with it. If the poor were only thoroughly unhappy, they'd change things to-morrow. No, Mr. Joe, it's not a question of happiness; it's a question of justice, of right, of progress, of developing people's possibilities. It's all the question of a better life, a richer life. People are sacred—they mustn't be reduced to animals."

And with her aid he gained a truer perspective of the life about him—learned better how to touch it, how to "work" it. The paper became more and more adapted to its audience, and began to spread rapidly. Here and there a labor union would subscribe for it in bulk for all its members, and the Stove Circle soon had many a raw recruit drumming up trade, making house-to-house canvasses. In this way, the circulation finally reached the five-thousand mark. There were certain unions, such as that of the cloak-makers, that regarded the paper as their special oracle—swore by it, used it in their arguments, made it a vital part of their mental life.

This enlarged circulation brought some curious and unlooked-for results. Some of the

magazine writers in the district got hold of a copy, had a peep at Joe, heard of his fame, and then took copies up-town to the respectable editors and others, and spread a rumor of "that idiot, Joe Blaine, who runs an underground paper down on Tenth Street." As a passion of the day was slumming, and as nothing could be more piquant than the West Tenth Street establishment, Joe was amused to find automobiles drawing up at his door, and the whole neighborhood watching breathlessly the attack of some flouncy woman or some tailor-made man.

"How perfectly lovely!" one fair visitor announced, while the office force watched her pose in the center of the room. "Mr. Blaine, how dreadful it must be to live with the poor!"

"It's pretty hard," said Joe, "to live with any human being for any length of time."

"Oh, but the poor! They aren't clean, you know; and such manners!"

Sally spoke coldly.

"I guess bad manners aren't monopolized by any particular class."

The flouncy one flounced out.

These visits finally became very obnoxious, though they could not be stopped. Even a sign, over the door-bell, "No begging; no slumming," was quite ineffective in shutting out either class.

There were, however, other visitors of a more interesting type—professional men, even business

men, who were drawn by curiosity, or by social unrest, or by an ardent desire to be convinced. Professor Harraman, the sociologist, came, and made quite a dispassionate study of Joe, put him (so he told his mother) on the dissecting-table and vivisected his social organs. Then there was Blakesly, the corporation lawyer, who enjoyed the discussion that arose so thoroughly that he stayed for supper and behaved like a gentleman in the little kitchen, even insisting on throwing off his coat, rolling up his sleeves, and helping to dry the dishes.

"You're all wrong," he told Joe when he left, "and some day possibly we'll hang you or electrocute you; but it's refreshing to rub one's mind against a going dynamo. I'm coming again. And don't forget that your mother is the First Lady of the Island! Good-by!"

Then there was, one important day, the great ex-trust man, whose name is inscribed on granite buildings over half the earth. This man—so the legend runs—is on the lookout for unusual personalities. The first hint of a new one puts him on the trail, and he sends out a detective to gather facts, all of which are card-indexed under the personality's name. Then, if the report is attractive, this man goes out himself and meets the oddity face to face. He came in on Joe jovial, happy, sparkling, and fired a broadside of well-chosen questions. Joe was delighted, and said anything he pleased, and his visitor shrewdly

went on. In the end Joe was stunned to hear this comment:

"Mr. Blaine, you're on the right track, though you don't know it. You think you want one thing, but you're after another. Still—keep it up. The world is coming to wonderful things."

"That's queer talk," said Joe, "coming from a multimillionaire."

The multimillionaire laughed.

"But I'm getting rid of the multi, Mr. Blaine. What more would you have me do? Each his own way. Besides"—he screwed up his eye shrewdly—"come now, aren't you hanging on to some capital?"

"Yes—in a way!"

"So are we all! You're a wise man! Keep free, and then you can help others!"

The most interesting caller, however, judged from the standpoint of Joe's life, was Theodore Marrin, Izon's boss, manufacturer of high-class shirtwaists, whose Fifth Avenue store is one of the most luxurious in New York. He came to Joe while the great cloak-makers' strike was still on, at a time when families were reduced almost to starvation, and when the cause seemed quite hopeless.

Theodore Marrin came in a beautiful heavy automobile. He was a short man, with a stout stomach; his face was a deep red, with large, slightly bulging black eyes, tiny mustache over his full lips; and he was dressed immaculately

and in good taste—a sort of Parisian-New Yorker, hail-fellow-well-met, a mixer, a cynic, a man about town. He swung his cane lightly as he tripped up the steps, sniffed the air, and knocked on the door of the editorial office.

Billy opened.

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Blaine in?"

"He's busy."

"I should hope he was! There, my boy." He deftly waved Billy aside and stepped in. "Well! well! Mr. Blaine!"

Joe turned about, and arose, and accepted Mr. Marrin's extended hand.

"Who do you think I am?"

Joe smiled.

"I'm ready for anything."

"Well, Mr. Blaine, I'm the employer of one of your men. You know Jacob Izon?"

"Oh, you're Mr. Marrin! Sit down."

Marrin gazed about.

"Unique! unique!" He sat down, and pulled off his gloves. "I've been wanting to meet you for a long time. Izon's been talking, handing me your paper. It's a delightful little sheet—I enjoy it immensely."

"You agree with its views?"

"Oh no, no, no! I read it the way I read fiction! It's damned interesting!"

Joe laughed.

"Well, what can I do for you?"

"What can I do for *you!*" corrected Marrin. "See here, Mr. Blaine, I'm interested. How about taking a little ad. from me, just for fun, to help the game along?"

"We don't accept ads."

"Oh, I know! But if I contribute handsomely! I'd like to show it around to my friends a bit. Come, come, don't be unreasonable, Mr. Blaine."

Sally shuffled about, coughed, arose, sat down again, and Joe laughed.

"Can't do it. Not even Rockefeller could buy a line of my paper."

"Do you *mean* it?"

"Absolutely—flatly."

"Well, what a shame! But never mind. Some other time. Tell me, Mr. Blaine"—he leaned forward—"what are you? One of these bloody socialists?"

"No, I'm not a socialist."

"What d'ye call yourself, then—Republican?"

"No."

"Democrat?"

"No."

"Insurgent?"

"No."

Marrin was horror-stricken.

"Not a blooming anarchist?"

Joe laughed.

"No, not an anarchist."

"What are you, then? Nothing?"

"I can tell you what I'm not," said Joe.

"What?"

"I'm not any kind of an *ist*."

"A fine fellow!" cried Marrin. "Why, a man's got to stand for something."

"I do," said Joe, "I stand for human beings—and sometimes," he chuckled, "I stand for a whole lot!"

Marrin laughed, so did Sally.

"Clever!" cried Marrin. "Damned clever! You're cleverer than I thought—hide your scheme up, don't you? Well! well! Let me see your plant!"

Joe showed him about, and Marrin kept patting him on the back: "Delightful! Fine! You're my style, Mr. Blaine—everything done to a nicety, no frills and feathers. Isn't New York a great town? There are things happening in it you'd never dream of."

And when he left he said:

"Now, if there's anything I can do for you, Mr. Blaine, don't hesitate to call on me. And say, step up and see my shop. It's the finest this side of Paris. I'll show you something you've never seen yet! Good-by!"

And he was whisked away, a quite self-satisfied human being.

That very evening Marrin's name came up again. It was closing-up time, Billy and Slate had already gone, and the room was dark save for the shaded lights over Joe's desk and Sally's

table. The two were working quietly, and outside a soft fall of snow was muffling the noise of the city. There only arose the mellowed thunder of a passing car, the far blowing of a boat-whistle, the thin pulse of voices. Otherwise the city was lost in the beautiful storm, which went over the gas-lamps like a black-dotted halo. In the rear room there was a soft clatter of dishes. The silence was rich and full of thought. Joe scratched on, Sally puzzled over reports.

Then softly the door opened, and a hoarse voice said:

"Joe? You there?"

Sally and Joe turned around. It was Izon, dark, handsome, fiery, muffled up to his neck, his hat drawn low on his face, and the thin snow scattering from his shoulders and sleeves.

"Yes, I'm here," Joe said in a low voice. "What is it?"

Izon came over.

"Joe!"—his voice was passionate—"there's trouble brewing at Marrin's."

"Marrin? Why, he was here only to-day!"

Izon clutched the back of a chair and leaned over.

"Marrin is a dirty scoundrel!"

His voice was hoarse with helplessness and passion.

Joe rose.

"Tell me about this! Put it in a word!"

Tears sprang to Izon's eyes.

"You know the cloak-makers' strike—well! Some manufacturer has asked Marrin to help him out—to fill an order of cloaks for him."

"And Marrin—" Joe felt himself getting hot.

"Has given the job to us men."

"How many are there?"

"Forty-five."

"And the women?"

"They're busy on shirtwaists."

"And what did the men do?"

"As they were told."

"So you fellows are cutting under the strikers—you're scabs."

Izon clutched the chair harder.

"I told them so—I said, 'For God's sake, be men—strike, if this isn't stopped.'"

"And what did they say?"

"They'd think it over!"

Sally arose and spoke quietly.

"Make them meet here. *I'll* talk to them!"

Izon muttered darkly:

"Marrin's a dirty scoundrel!"

Joe smote his hands together.

"We'll fix him. You get the men down here! You just get the men!"

And then Joe understood that his work was not child's play; that the fight was man-size; that it had its dangers, its perils, its fierce struggles. He felt a new power rise within him—a warrior strength. He was ready to plunge in and give battle—ready for a hand-to-hand con-

flict. Now he was to be tested in the fires; now he was to meet and make or be broken by a great moment. An electricity of conflict filled the air, a foreboding of disaster. His theories at last were to meet the crucial test of reality, and he realized that up to that moment he had been hardly more than a dreamer.

V

FORTY-FIVE TREACHEROUS MEN

OUT of the white, frosty street the next night, when every lamp up and down shone like a starry jewel beneath the tingling stars, forty-five men emerged, crowding, pushing in the hall, wedging through the doorway, and filling the not-too-large editorial office. Joe had provided camp-stools, and the room was soon packed with sitting and standing men, circles of shadowy beings, carelessly clothed, with rough black cheeks and dark eyes—a bunch of jabbering aliens, excited, unfriendly, curious, absorbed in their problem—an ill-kempt lot and quite unlovely.

At the center stove, a little way off from its red heart, sat Joe and Sally and Izon. The men began to smoke cigarettes and little cigars, and with the rank tobacco smell was mingled the sweaty human odor. The room grew densely hot, and a window had to be thrown open. A vapor of smoke filled the atmosphere, shot golden with the lights, and in the smoke the many heads, bent this way and that, leaning forward or tilted up, showed strange and a little unreal. Joe

could see faces that fascinated him by their vivid lines, their starting dark eyes and the white eyeballs, their bulging noses and big mouths. Hands fluttered in lively gestures and a storm of Yiddish words broke loose.

Joe arose, lifting his hand for silence. Men pulled each other by the sleeve, and a strident "'Ssh!" ran round the room.

"Silence!" cried Joe. His voice came from the depths of his big chest, and was masterful, ringing with determination.

An expectant hush followed. And then Joe spoke.

"I want to welcome you to this room. It belongs to you as much as to anybody, for in this room is published a paper that works for your good. But I not only want to welcome you: I want to ask your permission to speak at this meeting."

There were cries of: "Speak! Go on! Say it!"

Joe went on. Behind his words was a menace.

"Then I want to say this to you. Your boss, Mr. Marrin, has done a cowardly and treacherous thing. He has made scabs of you all. You are no better than strike-breakers. If you do this work, if you make these cloaks, you are traitors to your fellow-workers, the cloak-makers. You are crippling other workmen. You are selling them to their bosses. But I'm sure you won't stand for this. You are men enough to fight for

the cause of all working people. You belong to a race that has been persecuted through the ages, a brave race, a race that has triumphed through hunger and cold and massacres. You are great enough to make this sacrifice. If this is so, I call on you to resist your boss, to refuse to do his dirty work, and I ask you—if he persists in his orders—to lay down your work and *strike*."

He sat down, and there was a miserable pause. He had not stirred them at all, and felt his failure keenly. It was as if he had not reached over the fence of race. He told himself he must school himself in the future, must broaden out. As a matter of fact, it was the menace in his tone that hushed the meeting. The men rather feared what lay behind Joe's words.

At once, however, one of the men leaped to his feet, and began a fiery speech in Yiddish, speaking gaspingly, passionately, hotly, shaking his fist, fluttering his hands, tearing a passion to tatters. Joe understood not a word, but the burden of the speech was:

"Why should we strike? What for? For the cloak-makers? What have we to do with cloak-makers? We have troubles enough of our own. We have our families to support—our wives and children and relations. Shall they starve for some foolish cloak-makers? Comrades, don't listen to such humbug. Do your work—get done with it. You have good jobs—don't lose them. These revolutionists! They would break

up the whole world for their nonsense! It's not they who have to suffer; it's us working people. We do the starving, we do the fighting. Have sense; bethink yourselves; don't make fools out of yourselves!"

A buzz of talk arose with many gesticulations.

"He's right! Why should we strike—Och, Gott, such nonsense!—No more strike talk."

Then Sally arose, pale, eyes blazing. She shook a stanch little fist at the crowd. But how different was her speech from the one in Carnegie Hall—that time when she had been truly inspired.

"Shame on all of you! You're a lot of cowards! You're a lot of traitors! You can't think of anything but your bellies! Shame on you all! Women would never stand for such things—young girls, your sisters or your daughters, would strike at once! Let me tell you what will happen to you. Some day there will be a strike of shirtwaist-makers, and then your boss will go to the cloak-house and say, 'Now you make shirtwaists for me,' and the cloak-makers will make the shirtwaists, saying, 'When we were striking, the shirtwaist-makers made cloaks; now we'll make waists.' And that will ruin your strike, and ruin you all. Working people must unite! Working people must stand by each other! That's your only power. The boss has money, land, machinery, friends. What have you? You only have each other, and if you don't stand

by each other, you have nothing at all. Strike! I tell you! Strike and show 'em! Show 'em! Rise and resist! You have the power! You are bound to win! Strike! I tell you!"

Then a man shouted: "Shall a woman tell us what to do?" and tumult broke loose, angry arguments, words flying. The air seemed to tingle with excitement, expectation, and that sharp feeling of human crisis. Joe could feel the circle of human nature fighting about him. He leaned forward, strangely shaken.

Izon had arisen, and was trying to speak. The dark, handsome young man was gesturing eloquently. His voice poured like a fire, swept the crowd, and he reached them with their own language.

"Comrades! Comrades! Comrades!" and then his voice rose and stilled the tumult, and all leaned forward, hanging on his words. "You must" — he was appealing to them with arms outstretched — "you must! You will strike; you will not be cowards! Not for yourselves, O comrades, but for your children—*your children!* Do I not know you? Do I not know how you toil and slave and go hungry and wear out your bodies and souls? Have I not toiled with you? Have I not shared your struggles and your pain? Do I not know that you are doing all, all for your children—that the little ones may grow up to a better life than yours—that your little ones may be happier, and healthier, and

richer, and finer? Have I not seen it a thousand times? But what sort of a world will your children find when they grow up if you do not fight these battles for them? If you let the bosses enslave you—if you are cowards and slaves—will not your children be slaves? Oh, we that belong to Israel, have we not fought for freedom these bloody thousand years? Are we to cease now? Can't you see? Can't you open your hearts and minds?" His voice came with a passionate sob. "Won't you see that this is a fight for the future—a fight for all who work for wages—a fight for freedom? Not care for the cloak-makers? They are your brothers. Care for them, lest the day come when you are uncared for! Strike! You must—you *must!* Strike, comrades! We will hang by each other! We will suffer together! And it will not be the first time! No, not the first time—or the last!"

He sank exhausted on his chair, crumpled up. Sweat was running down his white face. There was a moment's hush—snuffling, and a few coarse sobs—and then a young man arose, and spoke in trembling voice:

"I move—we send Jacob Izon to-morrow to our boss—and tell him—either no cloaks, or—we strike!"

"Second! Second!"

Joe put the motion.

"All in favor, say aye."

There was a wild shout of ayes. The motion

was carried. Then the air was charged with excitement, with fiery talk, with denunciation and ardor.

"Now we're in for it!" said Joe, as the room was emptied, and the aroused groups trudged east on the crunching snow.

And so it was. Next morning, when Theodore Marrin made the rounds of the vast loft where two hundred girls and forty-five men were busily working—the machines racing—the air pulsing with noise—Jacob Izon arose, trembling, and confronted him.

"Well, Jacob!"

"I want to tell you something."

"Go ahead."

"The men have asked me to ask you not to have us make the cloaks."

Marrin's red face seemed to grow redder.

"So, that's it!" he snapped. "Well, here's my answer. Go back to your work!"

The men had stopped working and were listening. The air was electric, ominous.

Izon spoke tremblingly.

"I am very sorry then. I must announce that the men have struck!"

Marrin glared at him.

"Very well! And get out—quick!"

He turned and walked away, flaming with rage. The men quickly put their work away, got their hats and coats, and followed Izon. When they reached the street—a strange spec-

tacle on flashing, brilliant Fifth Avenue—Izon suggested that they go down to Tenth Street, for they stood about like a lot of lost sheep.

"No," cried one of the men, "we've had enough of Tenth Street. There's a hall we can use right over on Eighteenth Street. Come on."

The rest followed. Izon reported to Joe, and Joe asked:

"Do you think they'll fight it out?"

"I don't know!" Izon shrugged his shoulders.

This doubt was justifiable, for he soon found that he was leading a forlorn hope. As morning after morning the men assembled in the dark meeting-room behind a saloon, and sat about in their overcoats complaining and whining, quoting their wives and relatives, more and more they grew disconsolate and discouraged. There were murmurs of rebellion, words of antagonism. Finally on the fifth morning a messenger arrived with a letter. Izon took it.

"It's from Marrin," he murmured.

"Read it! Read it out loud!"

He opened it and read:

To My Men,—I have thought matters over. I do not like to sever connections with men who have been so long in my employ. If you return to work this morning, you may go on at the old salaries, and we will consider the matter closed. If, however, you listen to advice calculated to ruin your future, and do

not return, please remember that I will not be responsible. I shall then secure new men, and your places will be occupied by others.

Yours faithfully,
THEODORE MARRIN.

P.S.—Naturally, it is understood that under no circumstance will your leader—Jacob Izon—the cause of this trouble between us—be re-employed. Such men are a disgrace to the world.

Izon's cheeks flushed hot. He looked up.

"Shall I write to him that we will not consider his offer, and tell him we refuse to compromise?"

There was a silence a little while, and then one of the older men shuffled to his feet.

"Tell you what we do—we get up a collection for Izon. Then everything will be all right!"

Izon's eyes blazed.

"Charity? Not for me! I don't want you to think of me! I want you to think of what this strike means!"

Then some one muttered:

"We've listened long enough to Izon."

And another: "I'm going to work!"

"So am I! So am I!"

They began to rise, to shamefacedly shamble toward the door. Izon rose to his feet, tried to intercept them, stretched out his arms to them.

"For God's sake," he cried, "leave me out, but get something. Don't go back like this! Get something! Don't you see that Marrin is

ready to give in? Are you going back like weak slaves?"

They did not heed him; but one old man paused and put a hand on his shoulder.

"This will teach you not to be so rash next time. You will learn yet."

And they were gone. Izon was dazed, heart-broken. He hurried home to his wife and wept upon her shoulder.

Late that afternoon Joe and Sally were again alone in the office, their lights lit, their pens scratching, working in a sweet unspoken sympathy in the quiet, shadowy place. There was a turning of the knob, and Izon came in. Joe and Sally arose and faced him. He came slowly, his face drawn and haggard.

"Joe! Joe!"

"What is it?" Joe drew the boy near.

"They've gone back—the men have gone back!"

"Gone back?" cried Joe.

"Read this letter!"

Joe read it, and spoke angrily.

"Then I'll do something!"

Izon pleaded with him.

"Be careful, Joe—don't do anything foolish for my sake. I'll get along—"

"But your wife! How does she take it?"

Izon's face brightened.

"Oh, she's a Comrade! That's why I married her!"

"Good!" said Joe. "Then I'll go ahead. I'll speak my mind!"

"Not for me, though," cried Izon. "I'll get something else."

"Are you *sure* of that?" asked Joe.

"Why not?"

"Are you sure," Joe went on, "that you won't be blacklisted?"

Izon stared at him.

"Well—I suppose—I will."

"You'll have to leave the city, Jacob."

"I can't. I'm right in my course of engineering. I can't go."

"Well, we'll see!" Joe's voice softened. "Now you go home and rest. There's a good fellow. And everything will be all right!"

And he saw Izon out.

Joe began again to feel the tragic undercurrents of life, the first time since the dark days following the fire. He came back, and stood brooding, his homely face darkened with sorrow. Sally stood watching him, her pale face flushing, her eyes darting sympathy and daring.

"Mr. Joe."

"Yes, Miss Sally."

"I want to do something."

"What?"

"I want to go up to Marrin's to-morrow and get the girls out on strike."

"What's that?"

"I've done it before; I can do it again."

Joe laughed softly.

"Miss Sally, what would I do without you? I'd go stale on life, I think."

She made an impulsive movement toward him.

"Mr. Joe."

"Yes?"

"I want to help you—every way."

"I know you do." His voice was a little husky, and he looked up and met her fine, clear eyes.

Then she turned away, sadly.

"You'll let me do it?"

"Oh, no!" he said firmly. "The idea's appealing, but you mustn't think of it, Miss Sally. It will only stir up trouble."

"We ought to."

"Not for this."

"But the shirtwaist-makers are working in intolerable conditions; they're just ready to strike; a spark would blow 'em all up."

He shook his head.

"Wait—wait till we see what my next number does!"

Sally said no more; but her heart nursed her desire until it grew to an overmastering passion. She left for the night, and Joe sat down, burning with the fires of righteousness. And he wrote an editorial that altered the current of his life. He wrote:

FORTY-FIVE TREACHEROUS MEN

Theodore Marrin and the forty-four who went back to work for him:

Every one of you is a traitor to American citizenship. Let us use blunt words and call a spade a spade.

Theodore Marrin, you have betrayed your employees.

You forty-four men, you have betrayed yourselves and your leader.

And so it went, sharp, incisive, plain-spoken—words that were hot brands and burned.

He was sitting at this task (twice his mother had called him to supper and he had waved her away) when an exquisite black-eyed little woman came in.

"Mr. Blaine?"

"Yes."

"I'm Mrs. Izon."

Joe wheeled about and seized her hand.

"Tell me to do something for you! You and your brave husband!"

Mrs. Izon spoke quietly:

"I came here because Jacob is so worried. He is afraid you will harm yourself for us."

Joe laughed softly.

"Tell him not to worry any longer. It's you who are suffering—not I. I? I am only having fun."

She was not satisfied.

"We oughtn't to get others mixed up in our troubles."

"It's hard for you, isn't it?" Joe murmured.

"Yes." She smiled sadly. "I suppose it isn't right when you are in the struggle to get married. Not right to the children."

Joe spoke courageously.

"Never you mind, Mrs. Izon—but just wait. Wait three—four days. We'll see!"

They did wait, and they did see.

VI

A FIGHT IN GOOD EARNEST

SALLY hesitated before going into Marrin's that Monday morning. A blinding snowstorm was being released over the city, and the fierce gusts eddied about the corner of Fifth Avenue, blew into drifts, lodged on sill and cornice and lintel, and blotted out the sky and the world. Through the wild whiteness a few desolate people ploughed their way, buffeted, blown, hanging on to their hats, and quite unable to see ahead. Sally shoved her red little hands into her coat pockets, and stood, a careless soul, in the white welter.

From her shoulder, some hundred feet to the south, ran the plate-glass of Marrin's, spotted and clotted and stringy with snow and ice, and right before her was the entrance for deliveries and employees. A last consideration held her back. She had been lying awake nights arguing with her conscience. Joe had told her not to do it—that it would only stir up trouble—but Joe was too kindly. In the battles of the working people a time must come for cruelty, blows, and swift victory. Marrin was an out-and-out enemy

to be met and overthrown; he had made traitors of the men; he had annihilated Izon; she would fight him with the women.

Nor was this the only reason. Sally felt that her supreme task was to organize the women in industry, to take this trampled class and make of it a powerful engine for self-betterment, and no women were more prepared, she felt, than the shirtwaist-makers. She knew that at Marrin's the conditions were fairly good, though, even there, women and young girls worked sometimes twelve hours and more a day, and earned, many of them, but four or five dollars a week. What tempted Sally, however, was the knowledge that a strike at Marrin's would be the spark to set off the city and bring out the women by the thousands. It would be the uprising of the women; the first upward step from sheer wage-slavery; the first advance toward the ideal of that coming woman, who should be a man in her freedom and her strength and her power, and yet woman of woman in her love and her motherhood and wifehood. Industry, so Sally knew, was taking the young girls by the million, overworking them, sapping them of body and soul, and casting them out unfit to bear children, untrained to keep house, undisciplined to meet life and to be a comrade of a man. And Sally knew, moreover, what could be done. She knew what she had accomplished with the hat-trimmers.

Nevertheless, she hesitated, not quite sure that

the moment had come. Joe's words detained her in a way no man's words had ever done before. But she thought: "I do this for him. I sharpen the edge of his editorial and drive it home. Words could never hurt Marrin—but I can." She got under the shelter of the doorway and with numb hand pulled a copy of *The Nine-Tenths* from her pocket, unfolded it, and reread the burning words of: "Forty-five Treacherous Men." They roused all her fighting blood; they angered her; they incited her.

"Joe! Joe!" she murmured. "It's you driving me on—it's you! Here goes!"

It was in some ways a desperate undertaking. Once, in Newark, a rough of an employer had almost thrown her down the stairs, man-handling her, and while Marrin or his men would not do this, yet what method could she use to brave the two hundred and fifty people in the loft? She was quite alone, quite without any weapon save her tongue. To fail would be ridiculous and ignominious. Yet Sally was quite calm; her heart did not seem to miss a beat; her brain was not confused by a rush of blood. She knew what she was doing.

She climbed that first flight of semi-circular stairs without hindrance, secretly hoping that by no mischance either Marrin or one of his sub-bosses might emerge. There was a door at the first landing. She passed it quickly and started up the second flight. Then there was a turning

of a knob, a rustling of skirts, and a voice came sharp:

"Where are you going?"

Sally turned. The forelady stood below her—a large, eagle-eyed woman, with square and wrinkled face, quite a mustache on her upper lip. Sally spoke easily.

"Up-stairs."

"For what?"

"To see one of the girls. Her mother's sick."

The forelady eyed Sally suspiciously.

"Did you get a permit from the office?"

Sally seemed surprised.

"Permit? No! Do you have to get a permit?"

The forelady spoke roughly.

"You get a permit, or you don't go up."

"Where's the office?"

"In here."

"Thanks for telling me!"

Sally came down, and, as she entered the doorway, the forelady proceeded up-stairs. Sally delayed a second, until the forelady disappeared around the bend, and then quickly, quietly she followed, taking the steps two at a time. The forelady had hardly entered the doorway on the next landing when Sally was in with her, and treading softly in her footsteps.

This was the loft, vast, lit by windows east and west, and hung, this snow-darkened morning, with many glittering lights. Through all

the space girls and women, close together, bent over power-machines which seemed to race at intolerable speed. There was such a din and clatter, such a whizzing, thumping racket, that voices or steps would well be lost. Then suddenly, in the very center of the place, the forelady, stopping to speak to a girl, while all the girls of the neighborhood ceased work to listen, thus producing a space of calm—the forelady, slightly turning and bending, spied Sally.

She came up indignantly.

"Why did you follow me? Go down to the office!"

Many more machines stopped, many more pale faces lifted and watched.

Sally gave a quick glance around, and was a trifle upset by seeing Mr. Marrin coming straight toward her. He came with his easy, tripping stride, self-satisfied, red-faced, tastefully dressed, an orchid in his buttonhole. Sally spoke quickly.

"I was only looking for Mr. Marrin, and here he is!"

As Mr. Marrin came up, more and more machines stopped, as if by contagion, and the place grew strangely hushed.

The forelady turned to her boss.

"This woman's sneaked in here without a permit!"

Marrin spoke sharply.

"What do you want?"

Then in the quiet Sally spoke in a loud, exultant voice.

"I only wanted to tell the girls to strike!"

A sudden electricity charged the air.

"What!" cried Marrin, the vein on his forehead swelling. "You come in here—"

"To tell the girls to strike," Sally spoke louder. "For you've made the men traitors and you've blacklisted Izon."

Marrin sensed the danger in the shop's quiet.

"For God's sake," he cried, "lower your voice—speak to me—tell me in private—"

"I am," shrieked Sally. "I'm telling you I want the girls to strike!"

He turned.

"Come in my private office, quick! I'll talk with you!"

Sally followed his hurried steps.

"Yes, I'll tell you there," she fairly shrieked, "that I want the girls to strike!"

Marrin turned.

"Can't you shut up?"

And then Sally wheeled about and spoke to the two hundred.

"Girls! come on out! We'll tie him up! We're not like the men! *We* won't stand for such things, will we?"

Then, in the stillness, Jewish girls here and there rose from their machines. It was like the appearance of apparitions. How did it come that these girls were more ready than any one

could have guessed, and were but waiting the call? More and more arose, and low murmurs spread, words, "It's about time! I won't slave any more! He had no right to put out Izon! The men are afraid! Mr. Blaine is right!"

Marrin tried to shout:

"I order you to get to work!"

But a tumult drowned his voice, a busy clamor, an exultant jabber of tongues, a rising, a shuffling, a moving about.

Sally marched down the aisle.

"Follow me, girls! We're going to have a union!"

It might have been the Pied Piper of Hamelin whistling up the rats—there was a hurrying, a scurrying, a weird laughter, a blowing about of words, and the two hundred, first swallowing up Sally, crowded the doorway, moved slowly, pushed, shoved, wedged through, and disappeared, thundering, shouting and laughing, down the steps. The two hundred, always so subdued, so easily bossed, so obedient and submissive, had risen and gone.

Marrin looked apoplectic. He rushed over to where the forty-four men were sitting like frightened animals. He spoke to the one nearest him.

"Who was that girl? I've seen her somewhere!"

"She?" the man stammered. "That's Joe Blaine's girl."

"*Joe Blaine!*" cried Marrin.

"Look," said the man, handing Marrin a copy of *The Nine-Tenths*, "the girls read this this morning. That's why they struck."

Marrin seized the paper. He saw the title:

FORTY-FIVE TREACHEROUS MEN

and he read beneath it:

Theodore Marrin, and the forty-four who went back to work for him:

Every one of you is a traitor to American citizenship. Let us use blunt words and call a spade a spade.

Theodore Marrin, you have betrayed your employees.

And then farther down:

No decent human being would work for such a man. He has no right to be an employer—not in such hands should be placed the sacred welfare of men and women. If I were one of Marrin's employees I would prefer the streets to his shop.

Marrin looked up at the forty-four. And he saw that they were more than frightened—they were in an ugly humor, almost ferocious. The article had goaded them into a senseless fury.

Marrin spoke more easily.

"So that's your friend of labor, that's your Joe Blaine. Well, here is what your Joe Blaine has done for you. You're no good to me without the girls. You're all discharged!"

He left them and made madly for the door.

The men were chaotic with rage; they arose; their voices went sharp and wild.

"What does that Joe Blaine mean? He takes the bread out of our mouths! He makes fools of us! He ought to be shot! I spit on him! Curse him!"

One man arose on a chair.

"You fools—you listened to that man, and went on strike—and now you come back, and he makes you lose your jobs. Are you going to be fools now? Are you going to let him get the best of you? He is laughing at you, the pig. The girls are laughing at you. Come on! We will go down and show him—we will assemble before his place and speak to him!"

The men were insane with rage and demon-hate. Vehemently shouting, they made for the stairs, rushed pell-mell down, and sought the street, and turned south through the snow. There were few about to notice them, none to stop them. Policemen were in doorways and odd shelters. And so, unimpeded, the crazed mob made its way.

In the mean time Marrin had come out in his heavy fur coat and stepped into his closed automobile. It went through the storm, easily gliding, turned up West Tenth Street, and stopped before Joe's windows. Marrin hurried in and boldly opened the office door. Billy jumped up to intercept him.

"Mr. Blaine—" he began.

"Get out of my way!" snapped Marrin, and stepped up to Joe.

Joe was brooding at his desk, brooding and writing, his dark face troubled, his big form quite stoop-shouldered.

"Well," said Joe, "what's the matter, Mr. Marrin?"

Marrin tried to contain his rage. He pointed his cane at Joe.

"You've made a mistake, Mr. Blaine."

"It isn't the first one."

"Let me tell you something—"

"I will let you."

Marrin spoke with repression.

"Next time—don't attack both the boss and the men. It's bad policy. Take sides."

"Oh, I did take sides," said Joe, lightly. "I'm against anything treacherous."

Marrin exploded.

"Well, you'll get yours! And let me tell you something! I've a good mind to sue you for libel and shut up your shop."

Joe rose, and there was a dangerous light in his eyes. His hands were open at his sides, but they twitched a little.

"Then," said Joe, "I'll make it worth your while. If you don't want to be helped out, *get out!*"

"Very well," sputtered Marrin, and turned, twirling his cane, and made an upright exit.

The sad Slate was paralyzed; Billy was joyous.

But Joe strode into the kitchen, where his mother was quietly reading at the window.

"What is it, Joe?"

"Mother," he said, "that fellow Marrin was in threatening to sue me for libel."

"Could it hurt you?"

"It might. Speaking the truth is always libelous."

Joe's mother spoke softly.

"Your father lost an arm in the war. You can't expect to fight without facing danger. And besides," she laughed easily, "you can always get a job as a printer, Joe."

Joe paced up and down moodily, his hands clasped behind his back.

"If it was only myself—" he murmured, greatly troubled. "I wonder where Sally is this morning."

"Didn't she come, Joe?"

"No. Not a word from her. I'd hate her to be sick."

"Hadn't you better send over and see?"

"I'll wait a bit yet. And yet—" he sighed, "I just need Sally now."

His mother glanced at him keenly.

"Sally's a wonder," she murmured.

"She is—" He spoke a little irritably. "Why couldn't she have come this morning?"

There were quick steps, and Billy rushed in, his eyes large, his cheeks pale.

"Mr. Joe!" he said breathlessly.

"Yes, Billy."

"There's a lot of men out on the street, and they're beginning to fire snowballs!"

Nathan Slate came in, a scarecrow of fear, teeth chattering.

"Oh, Mr. Joe," he wailed. "Oh, Mr. Joe!"

Joe's mother rose, and spoke under her breath.

"Mr. Slate, sit down at once!"

Slate collapsed on a chair, trembling.

Joe felt as if a fork of lightning had transfixed him—a sharp white fire darting from head and feet and arms to his heart, and whirling there in a spinning ball. He spoke quietly:

"I'll go and see."

It seemed long before he got to the front window. Looking out through the snow-dim pane, he saw the street filled with gesticulating men. He saw some of the faces of the forty-four, but mingled with these were other faces—the faces of toughs and thugs, ominous, brutal, menacing. In a flash he realized that he had been making enemies in the district as well as friends, and it struck him that these were the criminal element in the political gang, hangers-on, floaters, the saloon contingent, who were maddened by his attempt to lead the people away from the rotten bosses. As if by magic they had emerged from the underworld, as they always do in times of trouble, and he knew that the excited East Side group was now flavored with mob-anarchy—that he had to deal, not with men whose worst

weapon was words, but with brutes who lusted for broken heads. Some of the faces he knew—he had seen them hanging about saloons. And he saw, too, in that swift scrutiny, that many of the men had weapons; some had seized crowbars and sledges from a near-by street tool-chest which was being used by laborers; others had sticks; some had stones. An ominous sound came from the mob, something winged with doom and death, like the rattling of a venomous snake, with head raised to strike, ready fangs and glittering eyes. He could catch in that paralyzing hum words tossed here and there: "Smash his presses! Clean him out! Lynch him, lynch him! Kill—kill—kill!—"

A human beast had coiled at his door, myriad-headed, insane, bloodthirsty, all-powerful — the mob, that terror of civilization, that sudden reversion in mass to a state of savagery. It boded ill for Joe Blaine. He had a bitter, cynical thought:

"So this is what comes of spreading the truth—of really trying to help — of living out an ideal!"

A snowball hit the window before him, a soft crash and spread of drip, and there rose from the mob a fiendish yell that seemed itself a power, making the heart pound, dizzying the brain.

Joe turned. His mother was standing close to him, white as paper, but her eyes flashing. She had not dared speak to Joe, knowing that this

fight was his and that he had passed out of her hands.

He spoke in a low, pulsing voice.

"Mother, I want you to stay in back!"

She looked at him, as if drinking her fill of his face.

"You're right, Joe," she whispered, and turned and went out.

Billy was standing at the stove, a frightened boy, but he gripped the poker in his hand.

"Billy," said Joe, quietly, "run down and tell Rann to keep 'em out of the press-room."

Billy edged to the door, opened it, and fled.

Joe was quite alone. He sat down at his desk and took up the telephone.

"Hello, Central!" his voice was monotonous in its lowness and tenseness.

"Hello!"

"Give me police headquarters—*quick!*"

Central seemed startled.

"Police—? Yes, right away! Hold on!—Here they are!"

"Hello! Police headquarters!" came a man's voice.

"This is Joe Blaine." Joe gave his address. "There's a riot in front of the house—a big mob. Send over a patrol wagon on the jump!"

At that moment there was a wild crash of glass, and a heavy stone sang through the air and knocked out the stove-pipe—pipe and stone

falling to the floor with a rumble and rattle—and from the mob rose murderous yells.

So Joe was able to add:

"They've just smashed my window with a stone. You'd better come damn fast."

"Right off!" snapped Headquarters.

Joe put down the telephone, and stepped quietly over the room and out into the hall. Even at that moment the hall door burst wide and a frenzied push and squabble of men poured forth upon him. In that brief glimpse, in the dim storm-light, Joe saw faces that were anything but human—wild animals, eyes blood-shot, mouths wide, and many fists in the air above their heads. There was no mercy, no thought, nothing civilized—but somehow the demon-deeps of human nature, crusted over with the veneer of gentler things, had broken through. Worse than anything was the crazy hum, rising and rising, the hoarse notes, the fierce discord, that beat upon his brain as if to drown him under.

Joe tried to shout:

"Keep back! I'll shoot! Keep back!"

But at once the rough bodies, the terrible faces were upon him, surrounding him, pushing him. He seized a little man who was jumping for his throat—seized and shook the little beast.

"Get back!" he cried.

Fists pushed into his eyes, blows began to rain upon his body and his head. He ducked. He felt himself propelled backward by an irresistible

force. He felt his feet giving way. Warm and reeking breath blew up his nostrils. He heard confused cries of: "Kill him! That's him! We've got him!" Back and back he went, the torn center of a storm, and then something warm and sweet gushed over his eyes, earth opened under him and he sank, sank through soft gulfs, deeper and deeper, far from the troublous noise of life, far, far—into an engulfing blackness.

The flood poured on, gushing down the stairway, at the foot of which Rann and his two men stood, all armed with wrenches and tools.

Rann shouted.

"I'll break the head of any one who comes!"

The men in advance tried to break away, well content to leave their heads whole, but those in the rear pushed them on. Whack! whack! went the wrench—the leader fell. But then with fierce screams the mob broke loose, the three men were swept into the vortex of a fighting whirlpool. Some one opened the basement gate from the inside and a new stream poured in. The press-room filled—crowbars got to work—while men danced and wildly laughed and exulted in their vandal work. Then suddenly arose the cry of, "Police!" Tools dropped; the mob turned like a stampede of cattle, crushed for the doors, cried out, caught in a trap, and ran into the arms of blue-coated officers. . . .

When Joe next opened his eyes and looked out with some surprise on the same world that he

was used to, he found himself stretched in his bed and a low gas-flame eyeing him from above. He put out a hand, because he felt queer about the head, and touched bandages. Then some one spoke in his ear.

"You want to keep quiet, Mr. Blaine."

He looked. A doctor was sitting beside him.

"Where's mother?" he asked.

"Here I am, Joe." Her voice was sweet in his ears.

She was sitting on the bed at his feet.

"Come here."

She took the seat beside him and folded his free hand with both of hers.

"Mother—I want to know what's the matter with me—every bit of it."

"Well, Joe, you've a broken arm and a bunged-up head, but you'll be all right."

"And you—are you all right?"

"Perfectly."

"They didn't go in the kitchen?"

"No."

"And the press?"

"It's smashed."

"And the office?"

"In ruins."

"How about Rann and the men?"

"Bruised—that's all."

"The police came?"

"Cleaned them out."

There was a pause; then Joe and his mother

looked at each other with queer expressions on their faces, and suddenly their mellow laughter filled the room.

"Isn't it great, mother? That's what we get!"

"Well, Joe," said his mother, "what do you expect?"

Suddenly then another stood before him—bowed, remorseful, humble. It was Sally Heffer, the tears trickling down her face.

She knelt at the bedside and buried her face in the cover.

"It's my fault!" she cried. "It's my fault!"

"Yours, Sally?" cried Joe, quite forgetting the "Miss." "How so?"

"I—I went to Marrin's and got the girls out."

"Got the girls out?" Joe exclaimed. "Where are they?"

"On the street."

"Bring them into the ruins," said Joe, "and organize them. I'm going to make a business of this thing."

Sally looked up aghast.

"But I—I ought to be shot down. It's I that should have been hurt."

Joe smiled on her.

"Sally! Sally! what an impetuous girl you are! What would I do without you?"

VII

OF THE THIRTY THOUSAND

ONE wonderful January twilight, when the clear, cold air seemed to tremble with lusty health, Myra sat alone in the Ramble, before the little frozen pond. And she thought:

"This is the bench we sat on; and it was here, that morning, that we quarreled; and this is the little pond; and those the trees — but how changed! how changed!"

A world-city practises magic. Any one who for years has slept in her walls and worn the pave of her streets and mingled with her crowds and her lighted nights, is changed by her subtle enchantment into a child of the city. He is never free thereafter. The metropolis may send him forth like a carrier-pigeon, and he may think he is well rid of his mistress, but the homing instinct inevitably draws him back. "All other pleasures," as Emerson said of love, "are not worth its pains." Myra thought that she hated New York—the great nervous sea of life, whose noise and stress and tragedy had shattered her health. She had longed for the peace of nature; she had gone forth to the meadows and the

mountains, and for a long time been content with the sounds of the barnyard and the farm, the wind and the brook; she had sunk, as it were, into the arms of the earth and rested on that great nourishing breast. She loved pure air, far horizons, quiet, and the mysterious changes of the landscape. She thought she was done with the city forever. For had she not found that the Vision of White Towers seen that first evening was hollow and bitter at the heart, that beneath the beauty was dust and horror, routine and disease?

But one snow-bound morning as she gazed out from the quiet house and saw the limitless white of the world, the fences buried, the trees loaded, the earth lost under the gray heavens, suddenly she was filled with a passionate desire for *life*. She was amazed at the restlessness in her heart. But she could not shake it off. Her desire was very definite—to walk down Eightieth Street, to hear and see the trolleys bounding down the little hill to Seventy-ninth Street, to shop on Third Avenue, to go threading her way through the swarm of school children outside the school gates. And then subtly she felt the elixir of a Broadway night, the golden witchery of the lights, the laughter-smitten people, the crowded cars and motors, the shining shops, the warmth of the crowd. A thousand memories of streets and rooms, of people and of things, flooded her mind. The country seemed barren and cold and lonely.

She was grievously homesick. It was as if the city cried: "It is winter; the world is dark and dead. Come, my children, gather together; gather here in my arms, you millions; laugh and converse together, toil together, light fires, turn on lights, warm your hands and souls at my flaming hearth. We will forget the ice and the twilight! Come, winter is the time for human beings!"

And so Myra awoke to the fact that she was indeed a child of the city—that the magic was in her blood and the enchantment in her heart. It was useless to recall the mean toil, the narrow life, the unhealthy days. These, dropped in the great illusion of crowded New York, were transformed into a worthy struggle, a part of the city's reality. She suddenly felt as if she would go crazy if she stayed in the country—its stillness stifled her, its emptiness made her ache.

But there was a deeper call than the call of the city. She wanted to be with Joe. Her letters to him had been for his sake, not hers. She had tried to save him from herself, to shut him out and set him free, to cure him of his love. Desperately she did this, knowing that the future held nothing for them together. And for a time it had been a beautiful thing to do, until finally she was compelled to believe that he really was cured. His notes were more and more perfunctory, until, at last, they ceased altogether. Then, when she knew she had lost him, it seemed to her that she

had condemned herself to a barren, fruitless life; that the best had been lived, and it only remained now to die. She had given up her "whole existence," cast out that by which she truly lived. There were moments of inexpressible loneliness, when, reading in the orchard, or brooding beside some rippling brook, she glanced southward and sent her silent cry over the horizon. Somewhere down there he was swallowed in the vastness of life; she remembered the lines of his face, his dark melancholy eyes, his big human, humorous lips, his tall, awkward strength; she felt still those kisses on her lips; felt his arms about her; the warmth of his hand; the whisper of his words; and the wind in the oaks.

That afternoon at the riverside he had cast his future at her feet. She had been offered that which runs deeper than hunger or dream or toil, the elemental, the mystic, the very glory of a woman's life. She had been offered a life, too, of comradeship and great issues. And now, when these gifts were withdrawn, she knew she would nevermore have rest or joy in this world. Is not life the adventure of a man and a woman going forth together, toiling, and talking, and laughing, and creating on the road to death? Is not earth the mating-place for souls? Out of nature we rise and seek out each other and mate and make of life a glory and a mystery. This is the secret of youth, and the magic of all music

and of all sorrow and of all toil. Or, so it seemed to Myra.

There is no longing in the world so tragic or terrible as that of men and women for each other. And so Myra had her homesickness for the city transfused and sharpened by her overmastering love. She fought with herself bitterly; she resolved to wait for one more mail. Nothing came in that mail.

Then she evaded the issue. There were practical reasons for her return. Her health was quite sound again, she had been idle long enough; it was time to get back to work. What if she did return to the city? Surely it was not necessary to seek out Joe. It would be enough to be near him. He need not be troubled. So vast is the city that he would not know of her presence. What harm, then, in easing her heart, in getting back into the warmth and stir of life?

With a young girl's joy she packed her trunk and took the train for New York, and at sunset, as she rode in the ferry over the North River, she stood bravely out on deck, faced the bitter and salt wind, and saw, above the flush of the waters, that breathless skyline which, like the prow of some giant ship, seemed making out to sea. Lights twinkled in windows, signal-lamps gleamed red and green on the piers, chimneys smoked, and as the ferry nosed its way among the busy craft of the river, Myra exulted. She was coming back! This again was New York, real, right

there, unbudged, her thousand lights like voices calling her home. The ferry landed; she hurried out and took a surface car And how good the crowd seemed, how warm the noise and the lights, what gladness was in the evening ebb-tide of people, how splendid the avenues shone with their sparkle and their shops and their traffic! She felt again the good hard pave under her feet. She met again a hundred familiar scenes. The vast flood of life seemed to engulf her, suck her up as if to say: "Well, you're here again! Come, there is room! Another human being!"

All about her was rich life, endless sights, confusion and variety. The closing darkness was pierced with lights, windows glowed, people were hurrying home. It was all as she had left it. And she felt then that the city was but Joe multiplied, and that Joe was the city. Both were cosmopolitan, democratic, tragic, light-hearted, many-faceted. Both were careless and big and easy and roomy. Both had a great freedom about them. And what a freedom the city had!—nothing snowbound here, but invitation, shops open, cars gliding, the millions transported back and forth, everything open and inviting.

She was glad for her neat back room—for gas-lights and running water—for the comfort and ease of life. She was glad even to sit in the crowded dining-room, and that night she was glad to lie abed and hear the city's heart pound-

ing about her—that old noise of whistles on the river, that old thunder of the elevated train.

But she found that nearness to Joe made it impossible to keep away from him. Just as of old she had found excuses for going up to the trembling printery, so now she felt that somehow she must seek him out. She kept wondering what he was doing at that particular moment. Was he toiling or idling? Was he with his mother? Did he still wear the same clothes, the same half-worn necktie, the same old lovable gray hat? What would he say, how would he look, if she suddenly confronted him? Myra had to laugh softly to herself. She saw the wonder in his face, the open mouth, the flashing eyes. Or, would he be embarrassed? Was there some other woman—one who accorded with his ideals—one who could share his life-work? Of course she hoped that there was. She hoped he had found some one worthy of him. But the thought gave her intense misery. Why had he thrown his life away and gone down into that foolish and shoddy neighborhood? Surely when she saw him she would be disappointed by the changes in him. He would be more than ever a fanatic—more than ever an unreasonable radical. He might even be vulgarized by his environment—might have taken its color, been leveled down by its squalor.

She must forget the new Joe and cleave to the old Joe. Next afternoon, walking out, al-

most involuntarily, she turned west and entered the Park. The trees were naked, a lacy tracery of boughs against the deep-blue sky. She followed the curve, she crossed the roadway, she climbed the hill to the Ramble. She began to tingle with the keen, crisp air, and with the sense of adventure. It was almost as if she were going to meet Joe—as if they had arranged a secret meeting. She took the winding paths, she passed the little pool. There was the bench! But empty.

Then she sat down on that bench, and looked out at the naked wilderness of trees, at the ice in the pond, at the sodden brown, dead grasses. The place was wildly forlorn and bare. When they had last been here the air had been tinged with the haunting autumn, the leaves had been falling, the pool had been deep with the heavens. And again she thought:

"This is the bench we sat on; and it was here, that morning, that we quarreled; this is the little pond, and those the trees—but how changed! how changed!"

Then as she sat there she beheld the miracle of color. Behind her, between the black tree trunks, the setting sun was a liquid red splendor, daubing some low clouds with rosiness, and all about her, in the turn between day and night, the world, which before was a blend in the strong light, now divided into a myriad sharp tints. The air held a tinge of purple, the distance a

smoky violet, the brown of the grasses was a strong brown, the black of the trunks intensely black. Out among distant trees she saw a woman and child walking, and the child's scarlet cloak seemed a living thing as it swayed and moved. How sharp and distinct were the facts of earth! how miraculously tinted! what tones of blue and red, of purple and black! It was the sunset singing its hymn of color, and it made her feel keenly the mystery and beauty of life—the great moments of solution and peace—the strange human life that inhabits for a brief space this temple of a million glories. But something was missing, there was a great lack, a wide emptiness. She resolved then to see Joe.

It was not, however, until the next afternoon that she took the elevated train to Ninth Street and then the crosstown car over the city. She alighted in the shabby street; she walked up to the entrance; she saw over the French windows a big canvas sign, "Strike Headquarters." Within, she thought she saw a mass of people. This made her hesitate. She had expected to find him alone. And somehow, too, the place was even shabbier, even meaner than she had expected. And so she stood a moment—a slender, little woman, her hands in a muff, a fur scarf bound about her throat, her gray eyes liquid and luminous, a rosy tint in her cheeks, her lips parted and releasing a thin steam in the bitter winter air. Overhead the sky was

darkening with cloud-masses, a shriveling wind dragged the dirty street, and the world was desolate and gray. The blood was pulsing in Myra's temples, her heart leaped, her breath panted. And as she hesitated a girl passed her, a girl about whose breast was bound a placard whereon were the words:

JOIN THE STRIKE
OF THE THIRTY THOUSAND

What strike? What did it mean? Was Joe in a strike? She thought he had been editing a paper. She had better not intrude. She turned, as if to fly, and yet hesitated. Her feet refused to go; her heart was rebellious. Only a wall divided him from her. Why should she not see him? Why not a moment's conversation? Then she would go and leave him to his work.

Another girl passed her and paused—a girl also placarded, a girl with a strange beauty, somewhat tall, with form well rounded, with pale face full of the fascination of burning eagerness. This girl's eyes were a clear blue, her lips set tight, and her light-brown hair blew beautifully about her cheeks. She was, however, but thinly clothed, and her frail little coat was short and threadbare.

She spoke to Myra—a rich, sympathetic voice.

"Are you looking for Mr. Blaine?"

"Yes—" said Myra, almost gasping. "Is he in?"

"He's always in!" The girl smiled.

"There's nothing the matter?"

"With him? No! But come, come out of the cold!"

There was nothing to do but follow. The girl opened a door and they entered the office. It was crowded with girls and women and men. Long benches were about the wall, camp-stools filled the floor. Many were seated; on two of the benches worn-out men were fast asleep, and between the seats groups of girls were talking excitedly. Several lights burned in the darkening room, and Myra saw swiftly the strange types—there were Jewish girls, Italian girls, Americans, in all sorts of garbs, some very flashy with their "rat"-filled hair, their pompadours, their well-cut clothes, others almost in rags; some tall, some short, some rosy-cheeked, many frail and weak and white. At a table in the rear Giotto was receiving money from Italians and handing out union cards. He looked as if he hadn't slept for nights.

Myra was confused. She felt strangely "out" of all this; strangely, as if she were intruding. The smell of the place offended her, especially as it was mixed with cheap perfumes; and the coarse slangy speech that flashed about jarred on her ear. But at the same time she was suffocating with suspense.

"Where is he?" she murmured—they were standing right within the door.

"Over there!" the girl pointed.

But all Myra saw was a black semicircle of girls leaning over some one invisible near the window.

"He's at his desk, and he's talking with a committee. You'd better wait till he's finished!"

This news choked Myra. Wait? Wait here? Be shut out like this? She was as petulant as a child; she felt like shedding tears.

But the girl at her side seemed to be playing the part of hostess, and she had to speak.

"What strike is this?"

The girl was amazed.

"*What strike!* Don't you know?"

Myra smiled.

"No—I don't. I've been out of the city."

"It's the shirtwaist-makers' strike."

"Oh! I see!" said Myra, mechanically.

"It's the biggest woman's strike that ever was. Thirty thousand out—Italians, Jews, and Americans."

"Yes?" Myra was not listening.

Suddenly then the door was flung open and a well-dressed girl rushed in, crying shrilly:

"Say, girls, what do you think?"

A group gathered about her.

"What's up? What's the news? Don't stand there all day!"

The girl spoke with exultant indignation.

"I've been arrested!"

"Arrested! *You!*"

"And I didn't do nothing, either—I was good. What do you think of this? The judge fined me ten dollars. Well, let me tell you, I'm going to *get something* for those ten dollars! I'm going to raise—hell!"

"You bet! Ain't it a shame?"

And the group swallowed her up.

Myra wondered why the girl had been arrested, and was surprised at her lack of shame and humiliation.

But she had not much time for thought. The door opened again, and Sally Heffer entered, sparkling, neat, eyes clear.

At once cries arose:

"Here's Sal! Hello, Sally Heffer! Where have you been?" Girls crowded about. "What's the news? Where did you come from?"

Where had Myra heard that name before?

Sally spoke with delicious fastidiousness.

"*I've* been to Vassar."

"Vassar College?"

"Yes, Vassar College—raised fifty dollars!"

"Sally's it, all right! Say, Sal, how did they treat you? Stuck up?"

"Not a bit," said Sally. "They were ever so good to me. They're lovely girls—kind, sweet, sympathetic. They wanted to help and they were very respectful, but"—she threw up her hands—"*oh, they're ignorant!*"

There was a shout of laughter. Myra was shocked. A slum girl to speak like this of Vassar students? She noticed then, with a queer pang, that Sally made for the window group, who at once made a place for her. Sally had easy access to Joe.

The girl at her side was speaking again.

"You've no idea what this strike means. There's some rich women interested in it—they work right with us, hold mass-meetings, march in the streets—they're wonderful. And some of the big labor-leaders and even some of the big lawyers are helping. There's one big lawyer been giving all his time. You see, we're having trouble with the police."

"Yes, I see," said Myra, though she didn't see at all, and neither did she care. It seemed to her that she could not wait another instant. She must either go, or step over to his desk.

"Is he still so busy?" she asked.

"Yes, he is," said the girl. "Do you know him personally?"

Myra laughed softly.

"A little."

"Then you heard how he was hurt?"

"*Hurt!*" gasped Myra. Her heart seemed to grow small, and it was pierced by a sharp needle of pain.

"Yes, there was a riot here—the men came in and smashed everything."

"And Mr. Blaine? *Tell me!*" The words came in a blurt.

"Had his arm broken and his head was all bloody."

Myra felt dizzy, faint.

"But he's—better?"

"Oh, he's all right now."

"When did this happen?"

"About six weeks ago!"

Six weeks! That was shortly after the last letter came. Myra was suffering agony, and her face went very pale.

"How did it happen?" she breathed.

"Oh, he called some strikers traitors, and they came down and broke in. It's lucky he wasn't killed."

He had suffered, he had been in peril of his life, while she was resting in the peace of the country. So this was a strike, and in this Joe was concerned. She looked about the busy room; she noticed anew the sleeping men and the toiling Giotto; and suddenly she was interested. She was wrenched, as it were, from her world into his. She felt in the heart of a great tragedy of life. And all the time she kept saying over and over again:

"His arm was broken! his head bloody! and I wasn't here! I wasn't at his side!"

And she had thought in her country isolation that life in the city wasn't real. What a moment that must have been when Joe faced the rioters—

when they rushed upon him—when he might have been killed! And instead of deterring him from his work, here he was in the thick of it, braving, possibly, unspeakable dangers. Then, glancing about, it seemed to her that these girls and men were a part of his drama; he gave them a new reality. This was life, pulsing, immediate, tragic. She must go to him—she mustn't delay longer.

She took a few steps forward, and at almost the same moment the girls about Joe left him, scattering about the room. Then she saw him. And what a spectacle! He was in his shirt-sleeves, his hair was more tousled than ever, and his face was gray—the most tragic face she had ever seen—gray, sunken, melancholy, worn, as if he bore the burden of the world. But in one hand he held a pen, and in the other—a ham sandwich. It was a big sandwich, and every few moments he took a big bite, as he scratched on. Myra's heart was wrung with love and pity, with remorse and fondness, and mainly with the tragi-comedy of his face and the sandwich.

She stood over him a moment, breathless, panting, her throat full of blood, it seemed. Then she stooped a little and whispered:

"Joe."

He wheeled round; he looked up; his gray face seemed to grow grayer; his lips parted—he was more than amazed. He was torn away, as it were, from all business of life.

"Why," he said under his breath, "it's you, Myra!"

"Yes"—tears stood in her eyes—"it's I."

He surveyed her up and down, and then their eyes met. He ran his hand through his hair.

"You—you—" he murmured. "And how well you look, how strong, how fresh! Sit down! sit down!"

She took the seat, trembling. She leaned forward.

"But you—you are killing yourself, Joe."

He smiled sadly.

"It's serious business, Myra."

She gazed at him, and spoke hard.

"Is there no end to it? Aren't you going to rest, ever?"

"End? No end now. The strike must be won."

He was trying to pull himself together. He gave a short laugh; he sat up.

"So you're back from the country."

"Yes, I'm back."

"To stay?"

"To stay."

"You're cured, then?"

"Yes," she smiled, "cured of many things. I like the city better than I thought!"

He gave her a sharp look.

"So!" Then his voice came with utter weariness: "Well, the city's a queer place, Myra. Things happen here."

Somehow she felt that he was standing her off. Something had crept in between them, some barrier, some wall. He had already emerged from the shock of the meeting. What if there were things in his life far more important than this meeting? Myra tried to be brave.

"I just wanted to see you—see the place—see how things were getting on."

Joe laughed softly.

"Things *are* getting on. Circulation's up to fifteen thousand—due to the strike."

"How so?"

"We got out a strike edition—and the girls peddled it around town, and lots subscribed. It's given the paper a big boost."

"I'm glad to hear it," Myra found herself saying.

"*You* glad?" If only his voice hadn't been so weary! "That's strange, Myra."

"It *is* strange!" she said, her eyes suffused again. His gray, tragic face seemed to be working on the very strings of her heart. She longed so to help him, to heal him, to breathe joy and strength into him.

"Joe!" she said.

He looked at her again.

"Yes, Myra."

"Oh—I—" She paused.

He smiled.

"Say it!"

"Isn't there some way I can help?"

A strange expression came to his face, of surprise, of wonder.

"*You* help?"

"Yes—I—"

"Mr. Blaine! Mr. Blaine!" Some one across the room was calling. "There's an employer here to see you!"

Joe leaped up, took Myra's hand, and spoke hastily.

"Wait and meet my mother. And come again—sometime. Sometime when I'm not so rushed!"

And he was gone—gone out of the room.

Myra arose, still warm with the touch of his hand—for his hand was almost fever-warm. All that she knew was that he had suffered and was suffering, and that she must help. She was burning now with an eagerness to learn about the strike, to understand what it was that so depressed and enslaved him, what it was that was slowly killing him. Her old theories met the warm clasp of life and vanished. She forgot her viewpoint and her delicacy. Life was too big for her shallow philosophy. It seized upon her now and absorbed her.

She strode back to the young girl, who she learned later was named Rhona Hemlitz, and who was but seventeen years old.

She said: "Tell me about the strike! Can't we sit down together and talk? Have you time?"

"I have a little time," said Rhona, eagerly. "We can sit here!"

So they sat side by side and Rhona told her. Rhona's whole family was engaged in sweatwork. They lived in a miserable tenement over in Hester Street, where her mother had been toiling from dawn until midnight with the needle, with her tiny brother helping to sew on buttons, "finishing" daily a dozen pairs of pants, and making—*thirty cents*.

Myra was amazed.

"Thirty cents—dawn till midnight! Impossible!"

And then her father—who worked all day in a sweatshop.

"And you—what did you do?" asked Myra.

Rhona told her. She had worked in Zandler's shirtwaist factory—bending over a power-machine, whose ten needles made forty-four hundred stitches a minute. So fast they flew that a break in needle or thread ruined a shirtwaist; hence, never did she allow her eyes to wander, never during a day of ten to fourteen hours, while, continuously, the needles danced up and down like flashes of steel or lightning. At times it seemed as if the machine were running away from her and she had to strain her body to keep it back. And so, when she reeled home late at night, her smarting eyes saw sharp showers of needles in the air every time she winked, and her back ached intolerably.

"I never dreamt," said Myra, "that people had to work like that!"

"Oh, that's not all!" said Rhona, and went on. Her wages were rarely over five dollars a week, and for months, during slack season, she was out of work—came daily to the factory, and had to sit on a bench and wait, often fruitlessly. And then the sub-contracting system, whereunder the boss divided the work among lesser bosses who each ran a gang of toilers, speeding them up mercilessly, "sweating" them! And so the young girls, sixteen to twenty-five years old, were sapped of health and joy and womanhood, and, "as Mr. Joe wrote, the future is robbed of wives and mothers!"

Myra was amazed. She had a new glimpse of the woman problem. She saw now how millions of women were being fed into the machine of industry, and that thus the home was passing, youth was filched of its glory, and the race was endangered. This uprising of the women, then, meant more than she dreamed—meant the attempt to save the race by freeing the women from this bondage. Had they not a right then to go out in the open, to strike, to lead marches, to sway meetings, to take their places with men?

Such thoughts, confused and swift, came to her, and she asked Rhona what had happened. How had the strike started? First, said Rhona, there was the strike at Marrin's—a spark that

set off the other places. Then at Zandler's conditions had become so bad that one morning Jake Hedig, her boss, a young, pale-faced, black-haired man, suddenly arose and shouted in a loud voice throughout the shop:

"I am sick of slave-driving. I resign my job."

The boss, and some of the little bosses, set upon him, struck him, and dragged him out, but as he went he shouted lustily:

"Brothers and sisters, are you going to sit by your machines and see a fellow-worker used this way?"

The machines stopped: the hundreds of girls and the handful of men marched out simultaneously. Then, swiftly the sedition had spread about the city until a great night in Cooper Union, when, after speeches of peace and conciliation, one of the girls had risen, demanded and secured the floor, and moved a general strike. Her motion was unanimously carried, and when the chairman cried, in Yiddish: "Do you mean faith? Will you take the old Jewish oath?" up went two thousand hands, with one great chorus:

"If I turn traitor to the cause I now pledge, may this hand wither from the arm I now raise."

By this oath Rhona was bound. And so were thirty thousand others—Americans, Italians, Jews—and with them were some of the up-town women, some of the women of wealth, some of

the big lawyers and the labor-leaders and reformers.

"Some of the up-town women!" thought Myra. She was amazed to find herself so interested, so wrought up. And she felt as if she had stumbled upon great issues and great struggles; she realized, dimly, that first moment, that this strike was involved in something larger, something vaster—swallowed up in the advance of democracy, in the advance of woman. All the woman in her responded to the call to arms.

And she was discovering now what Joe had meant by his "crisis"—what he had meant by his fight for "more democracy; a better and richer life; a superber people on earth." It was a real thing. She burned now to help Joe—she burned to do for him—to enter into his tragic struggle—to be of use to him.

"What are you going to do now?" she asked Rhona.

"Now? Now I must go picketing."

"What's picketing?"

"March up and down in front of a factory and try to keep scabs out."

"What are scabs?" asked ignorant Myra.

Rhona was amazed.

"You don't even know that? Why, a scab's a girl who tries to take a striker's job and so ruin the strike. She takes the bread out of our mouths."

"But how can you stop her?"

"Talk to her! We're not allowed to use violence."

"How do you do it?"

Rhona looked at the eager face, the luminous gray eyes.

"Would you like to see it?"

"Yes, I would."

"But it's dangerous."

"How so?"

"Police and thugs, bums hanging around."

"And you girls aren't afraid?"

Rhona smiled.

"We don't show it, anyway. You see, we're bound to win."

Myra's eyes flashed.

"Well, if you're not afraid, I guess I haven't any right to be. May I come?"

Rhona looked at her with swift understanding.

"Yes, please do come!"

Myra rose. She took a last look about the darkening room; saw once more the sleeping men, the toiling Giotto, the groups of girls. Something tragic hung in the air. She seemed to breathe bigger, gain in stature, expand. She was going to meet the test of these newer women. She was going to identify herself with their vast struggle.

And looking once more, she sought Joe, but could not find him. How pleased he would be to know that she was doing this—doing it largely for him—because she wanted to smooth out that

gray face, and lay her cheek against its lost wrinkles, and put her arm about his neck, and heal him.

Tears dimmed her eyes. She took Rhona's arm and they stepped out into the bleak street. Wind whipped their faces like quick-flicked knives. They walked close together.

"Is it far?" asked Myra.

"Quite far. It's over on Great Jones Street!"

And so Myra went, quite lost in the cyclone of life.

VIII

THE ARREST

THEY gained the corner of Great Jones Street—one of those dim byways of trade that branch off from the radiant avenues. As they turned in the street, they met a bitter wind that was blowing the pavement clean as polished glass, and the dark and closing day was set off sharply by the intense lamps and shop-lights. Here and there at a window a clerk pressed his face against the cold pane and looked down into the cheerless twilight, and many toilers made the hard pavement echo with their fast steps as they hurried homeward.

"There they are," said Rhona.

Two girls, both placarded, came up to them. One of them, a thin little skeleton, pitiably ragged in dress, with hollow eyes and white face, was coughing in the cuff of the wind. She was plainly a consumptive—a little wisp of a girl. She spoke brokenly, with a strong Russian accent.

"It's good to see you yet, Rhona. I get so cold my bones ready to crack."

She shivered and coughed. Rhona spoke softly.

"Fannie, you go right home, and let your mother give you a good drink of hot lemonade with whiskey in it. And take a foot-bath, too."

Fannie coughed again.

"Don't you tell me, Rhona. Look out for yourself. There gets trouble yet on this street."

Myra drew nearer, a dull feeling in her breast. Rhona spoke easily:

"None of the men said anything or did anything, did they?"

"Well, they say things; they make angry faces, and big fists, Rhona. Better be careful."

"Where are they?"

"By Zandler's doorway. They get afraid of the cold."

Rhona laughed softly, and put an arm about the frail body.

"Now you run home, and don't worry about me! I can take care of myself. I expect another girl, anyway."

"Good-night, Rhona."

"Good-night—get to bed, and don't forget the hot lemonade!"

The two girls departed, blowing, as it were, about the corner and out of sight. Rhona turned to Myra, whose face was pallid.

"Hadn't you better go back, Miss Craig? You see, I'm used to these things."

"No," said Myra, in a low voice. "I've come to stay."

She was thinking of tiny Fannie. What!

Could she not measure to a little consumptive Russian?

"All right," said Rhona. "Let's begin!"

They started to walk quietly up and down before the darkened loft building—up fifty yards, down fifty yards. A stout policeman slouched under a street-lamp, swinging his club with a heavily gloved hand, and in the shadow of the loft-building entrance Rhona pointed out to Myra several ill-looking private detectives who danced up and down on their toes, blew their hands, smoked cigarettes, and kept tab of the time.

"It's they," whispered Rhona, "who make all the trouble. Some of them are ex-convicts and thugs. They are a rough lot."

"But why is it allowed?" asked Myra.

Rhona laughed.

"Why is anything allowed?"

The wind seemed to grow more and more cruel. Myra felt her ear-lobes swelling, the tip of her nose tingled and her feet and hands were numb. But they held on quietly in the darkening day. It all seemed simple enough—this walking up and down. So this was picketing!

Myra spoke softly as they turned and walked west.

"Have many of the girls been arrested?"

"Oh yes, a lot of them."

"Have they been disorderly?"

"Some of them have. It's hard to keep cool,

with scabs egging you on and calling you cowards."

"And what happens to them if they are arrested?"

"Oh, fined—five, ten dollars."

They turned under the lamp; the policeman rose and sank on one foot after the other; they walked quietly back. Then, as they passed the doorway of the loft building, one of the young men stepped forward into the light. He was a square-set, heavy fellow, with long, square, protruding jaw, and little monkey eyes. His bearing was menacing. He stepped in front of the girls, who stopped still and awaited him. Myra felt the blood rush to her head, and a feeling of dizziness made her tremble. Then the man spoke sharply:

"Say, you—you can't go by here."

Myra gazed at him as if she were hypnotized, but Rhona's eyes flashed.

"Why not?"

"Don't jaw me," said the man. "But—*clear out!*"

Rhona tried to speak naturally.

"Isn't this a public street? Haven't I a right to walk up and down with my friend?"

Then Myra felt as if she were struck by lightning, or as if something sacred in her womanhood had been outraged.

With a savage growl: "You little sheeny!" the man suddenly struck out a fist and hit Rhona in

the chest. She lurched, doubled, and fell, saving herself with her hands. Myra did not move, but a shock of horror went through her.

The two other young men in the doorway came forward, and home-goers paused, drew close, looked on curiously and silently. One nudged another.

"What's up?"

"Don't know!"

The thug muttered under his breath:

"Pull her up by her hair; we'll run her in!"

But Rhona had scrambled to her feet. She was too wild to cry or speak. She glanced around for help, shunning the evil monkey eyes. Then she saw the policeman under the lamp. He was still nonchalantly swinging his club.

She gave a gasping sob, pushing away Myra's offered help, and struggled over to him. He did not move. She stood, until he glanced at her. Then she caught his eye, and held him, and spoke with strange repression, as the crowd drew about them. Myra was in that crowd, dazed, outraged, helpless. She heard Rhona speaking:

"Do you think a man has any right to strike a girl?"

He did not answer; she still held his eyes.

"Do you think a man has any right to strike a girl?"

Still he said nothing, and the crowd became fascinated by the fixity of gaze of the two. Rhona's voice sharpened:

"*Do you think a man has any right to strike a girl?*"

The officer cleared his throat and looked away.

"Oh," he muttered carelessly, "it's all right. You people are always kicking, anyway."

Rhona's voice rose.

"I ask you to arrest him."

Several in the crowd backed this with mutterings. The policeman twirled his stick.

"Oh, all right!" he called. "Come along, Blondy!"

Blondy, the thug, came up grinning.

"Pinching me, John?" he asked.

"Sure." The policeman smiled, and then seized Blondy and Rhona each by an arm and started to march them toward Broadway. Myra followed wildly. Her mind was in a whirl and the bitter tears blurred her eyes. What could she do? How could she help? She sensed in the policeman's word a menace to Rhona. Rhona was in trouble, and she, Myra, was as good as useless in this crisis. She suddenly understood the helplessness of the poor and the weak, especially the poor and weak women. What could they do against this organized iniquity? Against the careless and cruel world? It was all right for gentlewomen in gentle environment to keep to the old ideals of womanhood—to stay at home and delegate their citizenship to the men. But those who were sucked into the vortex of the rough world, what of these? Were they not

right in their attempts to organize, to rebel, to fight in the open, to secure a larger share of freedom and power?

But if these were Myra's feelings and thoughts —a sense of outrage, of being trampled on—they were little things compared with the agony in Rhona's breast. A growing and much-pleased crowd surrounded her, flinging remarks:

"Lock-steps for yours! Hello, Mamie! Oh, you kid! Now will you be good! Carrie, go home and wash the dishes!"

And one boy darted up and snapped the placard from her waist. The crowd laughed, but Rhona was swallowing bitter tears.

They passed down Broadway a block or two, and then turned west. Brilliant light from the shop windows fell upon the moving scene—the easy-going men, the slouching, shrill boys, and the girl with her pale set face and uncertain steps. All the world was going home to supper, and Rhona felt strangely that she was now an exile —torn by the roots from her warm life to go on a lonely adventure against the powers of darkness. She had lost her footing in the world and was slipping into the night. She felt singularly helpless; her very rage and rebellion made her feel frail and unequal to the task. To be struck down in the street! To be insulted by a crowd! She had hard work to hold her head erect and keep back the bitter sobs.

Up the darkened street they went, the crowd

gradually falling away. And suddenly they paused before the two green lamps of the new station-house, and then in a moment they had vanished through the doorway.

Myra rushed up, panting, to a policeman who stood on the steps.

"I want to go in—I'm with *her*."

"Can't do it, lady. She's under arrest."

"Not she," cried Myra. "The man."

"Oh, we'll see. You run along—keep out of trouble!"

Myra turned, confused, weak. She questioned a passer-by about the location of Ninth Street.

"Up Broadway—seven or eight blocks!"

She started; she hurried; her feet were winged with desperate fear. What could be done? How help Rhona? Surely Joe—Joe could do something. He would know—she would hasten to him and get his aid. That at least she could do.

Now and then a bitter sob escaped her. She felt that she had lost her self-respect and her pride. Like a coward she had watched Rhona attacked, had not even raised her voice, had not even attempted interference. They might have listened to a well-dressed woman, a woman of refinement. And she had done nothing—just followed the crowd, nursing her wounded pride. She began to feel that the world was a big place, and that those without money or position are at the mercy of the powerful. She began to revise

her opinion of America, more keenly than ever she understood Joe's passion for more democracy. And she had a sense, too, that she had never really known life—that her narrow existence had touched life at but a few minor points—and that the great on-struggle of the world, the vast life of the race, the million-eddying evolution were all outside her limits. Now she was feeling the edge of new existences. The knowledge humbled, almost humiliated her. She wondered that Joe had ever thought well of her, had ever been content to share his life with her.

Driven by these thoughts and by her fear and her apprehension for Rhona's safety, she plunged west, borne by the wind, buffeted, beaten, blown along. The lights behind the French windows were like beacons in a storm. She staggered into the hall, entered the room. Her hair was wild about her face, her cheeks pale, her eyes burning.

The room was still crowded, intensely busy. She noticed nothing, but pushed her way to Joe's desk. He was talking with two girls.

She confronted him.

"Joe!"

He lifted his gray, tragic face, amazed.

"You still here?"

It was as if he had forgotten her. But Myra was not now thinking of herself. She spoke, breathlessly:

"Joe, I think Rhona Hemlitz is in trouble."

"How so?"

"She was knocked down by a thug, and she had him arrested, but I'm afraid *she's* arrested."

A dangerous light came into Joe's eyes.

"All right! All right! Where did this happen?"

"On Great Jones Street."

"Well and good," he muttered.

"But isn't there anything to do?" cried Myra.

"Why, if she's not arrested, she'll come here and report, and if she doesn't come I'll go over to the Night Court at nine this evening."

"I must go with you," cried Myra.

"You?" He looked at her, and then suddenly he asked: "But how did you come to hear of this?"

"I was picketing with her."

A great change came over Joe's face, as if he beheld a miracle.

"Myra! So you have been picketing!"

Her face went very white.

"Don't! Don't!" she breathed painfully, sinking in a chair. "I was a coward, Joe—I didn't do anything to help her!"

"But what could you do?"

"Oh, something, anything."

He glanced at her keenly, and a swift smile lit his features. He spoke very gently.

"Myra, you step in back to my mother. Take supper with her. Keep her company. I'm afraid I'm neglecting mother these days."

"And the Night Court?" Myra was swallowing sobs.

"I'll look in for you at nine o'clock."

"Thank you," she whispered. "Oh, thank you."

It was something that he thought her worthy.

IX

RHONA

WHEN the policeman with Rhona and Blondy passed up the steps between the green lamps of the new station-house, they found themselves in a long room whose warmth was a fine relief. They breathed more easily, loosened their coats, and then stepped forward. A police sergeant sat behind a railing, writing at a low desk, a low-hanging, green-shaded electric bulb above him.

Rhona felt that she had to speak quickly and get in her word before the others. She tried to be calm, but a dull sob went with the words.

"That man struck me — knocked me down. I've had him arrested."

The sergeant did not look up. He went on writing. Finally he spoke, easily:

"True, Officer?"

The policeman cleared his throat.

"The other way round, Sergeant. *She* struck the *man*."

Rhona breathed hard, a feeling in her breast of her heart breaking. She gasped:

"That's not true. He struck me—he struck me."

The sergeant glanced up.

"What's your name?"

Rhona could not answer for a moment. Then, faintly:

"Rhona Hemlitz."

"Age?"

"Seventeen."

"Address?"

"—— Hester Street."

"Occupation?"

"Shirtwaist-maker."

"Oh!" he whistled slightly. "Striker?"

"Yes."

"Picketing?"

"Yes."

"Held for Night Court trial. Lock her up, Officer."

Blackness closed over the girl's brain. She thought she was going into hysterics. Her one thought was that she must get help, that she must reach some one who knew her. She burst out:

"I want to telephone."

"To who?"

"Mr. Blaine—Mr. Blaine!"

"West Tenth Street feller?"

"Yes."

The sergeant winked to the policeman.

"Oh, the matron 'll see to that! Hey, Officer?"

Rhona felt her arm seized, and then had a sense of being dragged, a feeling of cool, fetid air,

a flood of darkness, voices, and then she knew no more. The matron who was stripping her and searching her had to get cold water and wash her face. . . .

Later Rhona found herself in a narrow cell, sitting in darkness at the edge of a cot. Through the door came a torrent of high-pitched speech.

"Yer little tough, reform! reform! What yer mean by such carryings-on? I know yer record. Beware of God, little devil. . . ."

On and on it went, and Rhona, dazed, wondered what new terror it foreboded. But then without warning the talk switched.

"Yer know who I am?"

"Who?" quavered Rhona.

"The matron."

"Yes?"

"I divorced him, I did."

"Yes."

"My husband, I'm telling yer. Are yer deef?"

Suddenly Rhona rose and rushed to the door.

"I want to send a message."

"By-and-by," said the matron, and her rum-reeking breath came full in the girl's face. The matron was drunk.

For an hour she confided to Rhona the history of her married life, and each time that Rhona dared cry, "I want to send a message!" she replied, "By-and-by."

But after an hour was ended, she remembered.

"Message? Sure! Fifty cents!"

Rhona clutched the edge of the door.

"Telephone—I want to telephone!"

"Telephone!" shrieked the matron. "Do yer think we keep a telephone for the likes of ye?"

"But I haven't fifty cents—besides, a message doesn't cost fifty cents—"

"Are yer telling *me?*" the matron snorted. "Fifty cents! Come now, hurry," she wheedled. "Yer know as yer has it! Oh, it's in good time you come!"

Her last words were addressed to some one behind her. The cell door was quickly opened; Rhona's arm was seized by John, the policeman, and without words she was marched to the curb and pushed into the patrol wagon with half a dozen others. The wagon clanged through the cold, dark streets, darting through the icy edge of the wind, and the women huddled together. Rhona never forgot how that miserable wagonful chattered—that noise of clicking teeth, the pulse of indrawn sighs, and the shivering of arms and chests. Closer and closer they drew, as if using one another as shields against the arctic onslaught, a couple of poor women, and four unsightly prostitutes, the scum of the lower Tenderloin. One woman kept moaning jerkily:

"Wisht I was dead—down in my grave. It's bitter cold—"

The horses struck sparks against the pave, the wheels grided, and the wagon-load went west, up

the shadowy depths of Sixth Avenue, under the elevated structure, and stopped before Jefferson Market Court. The women were hustled out and went shuddering through long corridors, until at last they were shoved into a large cell.

At about the same moment Myra and Joe emerged from the West Tenth Street house and started for the court-house. They started, bowing their heads in the wind, holding on to their hats.

"Whew!" muttered Joe. "This is a night!"

Myra did not dare take his arm, and he spoke a little gruffly.

"Better hang on to me."

She slipped her arm through his then, gratefully, and tried to bravely fight eastward with him.

Joe was silent. He walked with difficulty. Myra almost felt as if she were leading him. If she only could have sent him home, nursed him and comforted him! He was so weary that she felt more like sending him to bed than dragging him out in this bitter weather.

More and more painfully he shuffled, and Myra brooded over him as if he were hers, and there was a sad joy in doing this, a sad glory in leading him and sharing the cruel night with him.

In this way they gained the corner of Sixth Avenue. Across the way loomed the illuminated tower-topped brick court-house.

"Here it is," said Joe.

Myra led him over, up the steps, and through the dingy entrance. Then they stepped into the court-room and sat down on one of the benches, which were set out as in a school-room.

The place was large and blue, and dimly lighted. The judge's end of it was screened off by wire netting. Up on a raised platform sat the magistrate at his desk, his eyes hidden by a green shade, his bald head radiant with the electric light above him. Clerks hovered about him, and an anæmic indoor policeman, standing before him, grasped with one hand a brass rail and with the other was continually handing up prisoners to be judged. All in the inclosed space stood and moved a mass of careless men, the lawyers, hangers-on, and all who fatten upon crime—careless, laughing, nudging, talking openly to the women of the street. A crass scene, a scene of bitter cynicism, of flashy froth, degrading and cheap. Not here to-night the majesty of the law; here only a well-oiled machine grinding out injustice.

Joe and Myra were seated among a crowd of witnesses and tired lawyers. The law's delay seemed to steep the big room with drowsiness; the air was warm and breathed in and out a thousand times by a hundred lungs. Myra looked about her at the weary, listless audience. Then she looked at Joe. He had fallen fast asleep, his head hanging forward. She smiled

sadly and was filled with a strange happiness. He had not been able to hold out any longer. Well, then, he should sleep, she thought; she would watch alone.

Then, as she sat and gazed, a drunken woman in the seat before her fell sound asleep. At once the big special officer at the little gate of wire netting came thumping down the aisle, leaned close, and prodded her shoulder with his forefinger, crying:

"Wake up, there!"

She awoke, startled, and a dozen laughed.

Myra had a great fear that the officer would see Joe. But he didn't. He turned and went back to his post.

Myra watched eagerly—aware of the fact that this scene was not as terrible to her as it might have been. The experience of the day had sharpened her receptivity, broadened her outlook. She took it for what it was worth. She hated it, but she did not let it overmaster her.

There was much business going forward before the judge's desk, and Myra had glimpses of the prisoners. She saw one girl, bespectacled, hard, flashy, pushed to the bar, and suddenly heard her voice rise shrill and human above the drone-like buzzing of the crowd.

"You dirty liar; I'll slap yer face if yer say that again!"

A moment later she was discharged, pushed

through the little gateway, and came tripping by Myra, shouting shrilly:

"I'll make charges against him—I'll break him—I will!"

Several others Myra saw.

A stumpy semi-idiot with shining, oily face and child-staring eyes, who clutched the railing with both big hands and stood comically in huge clothes, his eyes outgazing the judge. He was suddenly yanked back to prison.

A collarless wife-beater, with hanging lips and pleading dog's eyes, his stout Irish wife sobbing beside him. He got "six months," and his wife came sobbing past Myra.

Then there was an Italian peddler, alien, confused, and in rags, soon, however, to be set free; and next a jovial drunk, slapping the officers on the back, lifting his legs in dance-like motions and shouting to the judge. He was lugged away for a night's rest.

And then, of course, the women. It was all terrible, new, undreamed of, to Myra. She saw these careless Circes of the street, plumed, powdered, jeweled, and she saw the way the men handled and spoke to them.

Scene after scene went on, endless, confused, lost in the buzz and hum of voices, the shuffle of feet. The air grew warmer and more and more foul. Myra felt drowsy. She longed to put her head on Joe's shoulder and fall asleep—sink into peace and stillness. But time and again she

came to with a jerk, started forward and eagerly scanned the faces for Rhona. What had happened to the girl? Would she be kept in jail overnight? Or had something worse happened? An increasing fear took possession of her. She felt in the presence of enemies. Joe was asleep. She could not question him, could not be set at ease. And how soundly he slept, breathing deeply, his head hanging far forward. If only she could make a pillow for that tired head!

She was torn between many emotions. Now she watched a scene beyond the netting—something cynical, cheap, degrading—watched it with no real sense of its meaning—wondered where she was and how she had come—and why all this was going on. Then she would turn and look piteously at Joe, her face sharp with yearning. Then she would drowse, and awake with a start. She kept pinching herself.

"If I fall asleep Rhona may get through without us—something will happen!"

It must have been past midnight. There was no sign of Rhona. Each new face that emerged from the jail entrance was that of a stranger. Again an overwhelming fear swept Myra. She touched Joe's arm.

"Joe! Joe!" she whispered.

He did not answer; his hand moved a little and dropped. How soundly he slept! She smiled then, and sat forward, determined to be a brave woman.

Then glancing through the netting she spied Blondy and his friends laughing together. She saw the evil monkey eyes. At once she was back sharply in Great Jones Street, trembling with outrage and humiliation. She tried to keep her eyes from him, and again and again looked at him and loathed him.

"If," she thought, "he is here, perhaps the time has come."

Again she searched the new faces, and gave a little cry of joy. There was Rhona, pale, quiet, her arm in the hand of the policeman who had made the arrest.

Myra turned to Joe.

"Joe! Wake up!"

He stirred a little.

"Joe! Joe! Wake up!"

He gave a great start and opened his eyes.

"What is it?" he cried. "Do they want union cards?"

"Joe," she exclaimed, "Rhona's here."

"Rhona?" He sat upright; he was a wofully sleepy man. "Rhona?" Then he gazed about him and saw Myra.

"Oh, Myra!" He laughed sweetly. "How good it is to see you!"

She paled a little at the words.

"Joe," she whispered, "we're in the court. Rhona's waiting for us."

Then he understood.

"And I've been sleeping, and you let me

sleep?" He laughed softly. "What a good soul you are! Rhona! Come, quick!"

They arose, Joe rubbing his eyes, and stepped forward. Myra felt stiff and sore. Then Joe spoke in a low voice to the gate-keeper, the gate opened, and they entered in.

X

THE TRIAL

RHONA had spent the evening in the women's cell, which was one of three in a row. The other two were for men. The window was high up, and a narrow bench ran around the walls. Sprawled on this were from thirty to forty women; the air was nauseating, and the place smelled to heaven. Outside the bars of the door officers lounged in the lighted hall waiting the signal to fetch their prisoners. Now and then the door opened, a policeman entered, picked his woman, seized upon her, and pulled her along without speaking to her. It was as if the prisoners were dumb wild beasts.

For a while Rhona sat almost doubled up, feeling that she would never get warm. Her body would be still a minute, and then a racking spasm took her and her teeth chattered. A purple-faced woman beside her leaned forward.

"Bad business on the street a night like this, ain't it? Here, I'll rub your hands."

Rhona smiled bitterly, and felt the rub of roughened palms against her icy hands. Then she began to look around, sick with the smell, the

sudden nauseous warmth. She saw the strange rouged faces, the impudent eyes, the showy headgear, flashing out among the obscure faces of poor women, and as she looked a filthy drunk began to rave, rose tottering, and staggered to the door and beat clanging upon it, all the while shrieking:

"Buy me the dope, boys, buy me the dope!"

Others pulled her back. Women of the street, sitting together, chewed gum and laughed and talked shrilly, and Rhona could not understand how prisoners could be so care-free.

All the evening she had been dazed, her one clear thought the sending of a message for help. But now as she sat in the dim, reeking cell, she began to realize what had happened.

Then as it burst upon her that she was innocent, that she had been lied against, that she was helpless, a wild wave of revolt swept her. She thought she would go insane. She could have thrown a bomb at that moment. She understood revolutionists.

This feeling was followed by abject fear. She was alone . . . alone. . . . Why had she allowed herself to be caught in this trap? Why had she struck? Was it not foolhardy to raise a hand against such a mammoth system of iniquity? Over in Hester Street her poor mother, plying the never-pausing needle, might be growing anxious—might be sending out to find her. What new trouble was she bringing to her family?

What new touch of torture was she adding to the hard, sweated life? And her father—what, when he came home from the sweatshop so tired that he was ready to fling himself on the bed without undressing, what if she were missing, and he had to go down and search the streets for her?

If only Joe Blaine had been notified! Could she depend on that Miss Craig, who had melted away at the first approach of peril? Yet surely there must be help! Did not the Woman's League keep a lawyer in the court? Would he not be ready to defend her? That was a ray of hope! She cheered up wonderfully under it. She began to feel that it was somehow glorious to thus serve the cause she was sworn to serve. She even had a dim hope—almost a fear—that her father had been sent for. She wanted to see a familiar face, even though she were sure he would upbraid her for bringing disgrace upon the family.

So passed long hours. Prisoners came in—prisoners went out. Laughter rose—cries—mutterings; then came a long silence. Women yawned. Some snuggled up on the bench, their heads in their neighbors' laps, and fell fast asleep. Rhona became wofully tired — drooped where she sat—a feeling of exhaustion dragging her down. The purple-faced woman beside her leaned forward.

"Say, honey, put your head in my lap!"

She did so. She felt warmth, ease, a drowsy comfort. She fell fast asleep. . . .

"No! No!" she cried out, "it was *he* struck *me!*"

She had a terrible desire to sob her heart out, and a queer sensation of being tossed in mid-air. Then she gazed about in horror. She was on her feet, had evidently been dragged up, and John, the policeman, held her arm in a pinch that left its mark. Gasping, she was shoved along through the doorway and into a scene of confusion.

They stood a few minutes in the judge's end of the court-room—a crowd eddying about them. Rhona had a queer feeling in her head; the lights blinded her; the noise seemed like the rush of waters in her ears. Then she thought sharply:

"I must get myself together. This is the court. It will be all over in a minute. Where's Mr. Joe? Where's the lawyer? Where's my father?"

She looked about eagerly, searching faces. Not one did she know. What had happened? She felt the spasm of chills returning to her. Had Miss Craig failed her? Where was the strikers' lawyer? Were there friends waiting out in the tired audience, among the sleepy witnesses? Suddenly she saw Blondy laughing and talking with a gaudy woman in the crowd. She trembled all at once with animal rage. . . . She could have set upon him with her nails and her teeth. But she was fearfully afraid, fearfully helpless. What could she do? What would be done with her?

John pushed her forward a few steps; her own volition could not take her, and then she saw the judge. This judge—would he understand? Could he sympathize with a young girl who was wrongly accused? The magistrate was talking carelessly with his clerk, and Rhona felt in a flash that all this, which to her was terrible and world-important, to him was mere trivial routine.

She waited, her heart pounding against her ribs, her breath coming short and stifled. Then all at once she saw Joe and Myra as they entered the gate, and a beautiful smile lit up her face. It was a blessed moment.

They came up; Joe spoke in a low breath.

"Rhona, have you seen the lawyer about?"

"No," she muttered.

Joe looked around. He stood above that crowd by half a head. Then he muttered bitterly to Myra:

"Why isn't that fellow here to-night? You shouldn't have let me sleep!"

Myra was abashed, and Rhona, divining his misery, felt quite alone again, quite helpless.

Suddenly then she was pushed forward, and next the indoor policeman was handing her up to the judge, and now she stood face to face with her crisis. Again her heart pounded hard, her breath shortened. She was dimly aware of Joe and Myra behind her, and of Blondy and his friends beside her. She looked straight at the

magistrate, not trusting herself to glance either side.

The magistrate looked up and nodded to the policeman.

"What's the charge?" His voice was a colorless monotone.

"Assault, your Honor. This girl was picketing in the strike, and this private detective told her to move on. Then she struck him."

Rhona felt as if she could burst; she expected the magistrate to question her; but he continued to address the policeman.

"Any witnesses?"

"These other detectives, your Honor."

The magistrate turned to Blondy's friends.

"Is what the policeman says true?"

"Yes," they chorused

Joe spoke clearly.

"Your Honor, there's another witness."

The magistrate looked at Joe keenly.

"Who are you?"

"My name's Blaine—Joe Blaine."

"The editor?"

"Yes."

The magistrate spoke sharply:

"I can tell you now you'll merely damage the case. I don't take the word of such a witness."

Joe spoke easily.

"It's not my word. Miss Craig here is the witness. She saw the assault."

The magistrate looked at Myra.

"What were you doing at the time?"

Myra spoke hardly above a whisper, for she felt that she was losing control of herself.

"I—I was walking with Miss Hemlitz."

"Walking? You mean picketing."

"Yes."

"Well, naturally, your word is not worth any more than the prisoner's. You should have been arrested, too."

Myra could not speak any further; and the magistrate turned again to the policeman.

"You swear your charge is true?"

The policeman raised his hand.

"I swear."

Rhona felt a stab as of lightning. She raised her hand high; her voice came clear, sharp, real, rising above the drone-like noise of the court.

"I swear it is not true. I never struck him. *He* struck me!"

The magistrate's face reddened, a vein on his forehead swelled up, and he leaned toward Rhona.

"What you say, young lady"—there was a touch of passion in his voice—"doesn't count. Understand? You're one of these strikers, aren't you? Well, the whole lot of you"—his voice rose—"are on a strike against God, whose principal law is that man should earn bread by the sweat of his brow."

Rhona trembled before these unbelievable words. She stared into his eyes, and he went on passionately:

"I've let some of you off with fines—but this has gone too far. I'll make an example of you. You shall go to the workhouse on Blackwells Island for five days. Next!"

Joe, too, was dazed. But he whispered to Rhona:

"Meet it bravely. I'll tell the girls!"

Her arm was grasped, she was pushed, without volition, through crowding faces; and at length, after another ride in the patrol wagon, she found herself on a narrow cot in a narrow cell. The door was slammed shut ominously. Dim light entered through a high aperture.

She flung herself down her whole length, and sobbed. Bitter was life for Rhona Hemlitz, seventeen years old. . . .

Joe, in the court-room, had seized Myra's arm.

"Let us get out of this!"

They went through the gateway, up the aisle, out the dim entrance, into the streets. It was two in the morning, and the narrow cañons were emptied of life, save the shadowy fleeting shape of some night prowler, some creature of the underworld. The air was a trifle less cold, and a fine hard snow was sifting down—crunched underfoot—a bitter, tiny, stinging snow—hard and innumerable.

Cavernous and gloomy seemed the street, as they trudged west, arm in arm. Myra had never been so stirred in her life; she felt as if

things ugly and dangerous had been released in her heart; a flame seemed raging in her breast. And then as they went on, Joe found vent in hard words.

"And such things go on in this city—in this high civilization—and this is a part of life—and then they wonder why we are so unreasonable. It goes on, and they shut their eyes to it. The newspapers and magazines hush it up. No, no, don't give this to the readers, they want something pleasant, something optimistic! Suppress it! Don't let the light of publicity smite it and clear it up! Let it go on! Let the secret sore fester. It smells bad, it looks bad. Keep the surgeon away. We might lose subscribers, we might be accused of muck-raking. But I tell you," his voice rose, "this world will never be much better until we face the worst of it! Oh," he gave a heavy groan, "Myra! Myra! I wonder if I ever will be happy again!"

Myra spoke from her heart.

"You're overworked, Joe; you're unstrung. Perhaps you see this too big—out of perspective!"

He spoke with intense bitterness.

"It's all my fault. It's all my fault. If I hadn't been so sleepy I'd have sent for a lawyer. I thought, of course, he'd be there!"

Myra spoke eagerly:

"That's just it, Joe. Oh, won't you take a rest? Won't you go away awhile? Just for your work's sake."

He mused sadly:

"Mother keeps saying the same thing."

"She's right!" cried Myra. "Joe, you're killing yourself. How can you really serve the strike if you're in this condition?"

He spoke more quietly.

"They need me, Myra. Do you think I'm worse off than Rhona?"

Myra could not answer this. It is a curious fact that some of the terrible moments of life are afterward treasured as the great moments. Looked back upon, they are seen to be the vital step forward, the readjustment and growth of character, and not for anything would any real man or woman miss them. Afterward Myra discovered that this night had been one of the master nights of her life, and when she repictured that walk up Tenth Street at two in the morning, through the thin sifting snow, the big tragic man at her side, it seemed a beautiful and wonderful thing. They had been all alone out in the city's streets, close together, feeling as one the reality of life, sharing as one the sharp unconquerable tragedy, suffering together against the injustice of the world.

But at the moment she felt only bitter, self-reproachful, and full of pity for poor human beings. It was a time when the divine creatures born of woman seemed mere little waifs astray in a friendless universe, somehow lost on a cruel earth, crying like children in the pitiless night,

foredoomed and predestined to broken hearts and death. It seemed a very sad and strange mystery, and more sad, more strange to be one of these human beings herself.

They reached the house. Lights were still burning in the office, and when they entered they found the District Committee sitting about the red stove, still working out the morrow's plans. Giotto was there, Sally Heffer, and Jacob Izon, and others, tired, pale, and huddled, but still toiling wearily with one another. As Joe and Myra came in they looked up, and Sally rose.

"Is she—" she began, and then spoke angrily, "I can see she's been held."

Joe smiled sadly.

"Sent to the workhouse for five days."

Exclamations of indignation arose. The committee could not believe it.

"I wish," cried impetuous Sally, "that magistrate were my husband. I'd throw a flatiron at his head and put some castor-oil in his soup!"

Joe laughed a little. He looked at his watch, and then at Myra.

"Myra," he said, gently, "it's two o'clock—too late to go home. You must sleep with mother."

Myra spoke softly.

"No—I can get home all right."

He took her by the arm.

"Myra," he leaned over, "do just this one thing for me."

"I will!" she breathed.

He led her in through his room, and knocked softly.

"Mother!"

"Yes," came a clear, wide-awake voice. "I'm awake, Joe."

"Here's Myra. May she stay with you?"

"Good!"

Myra went in, but turned.

"Joe," she said, tremulously, "you're not going to stay up with that committee?"

"They need me, Myra."

"But, Joe," her voice broke—"this is too much of a good thing—"

Joe's mother interrupted her.

"Better leave the boy alone, Myra—to-night, anyway."

Joe laughed.

"I'll try to cut it short! Sweet dreams, ladies!"

For long they heard his voice mingled with the others, as they lay side by side in the black darkness. But Myra was glad to be near him, glad to share his invisible presence. After she had told Joe's mother about Rhona, the two, unable to sleep, talked quietly for some time. Drawn together by their love for Joe—and Joe's mother was quick in divining—they felt as if they knew each other intimately, though they had met for the first time that afternoon, when Myra, having reported Rhona's arrest to Joe, groped her way blindly to the rear kitchen and

stood, trying not to sob, before the elder woman.

She had asked:

"Are you Mrs. Blaine?" and had gone on. "I'm Myra—Myra Craig. Joe and I used to know each other."

Whereupon Joe's mother, remembering something Joe had said of writing to a Myra Craig in the country, suddenly understood. There was a swift, "What! You and he—?" a sob from Myra, and the two were in each other's arms. Then followed supper and a quiet evening.

And now in the darkness they lay and talked.

"I've been worrying about Joe," Mrs. Blaine mused, softly.

"Why?"

"Can't you see why?"

"He looks badly," Myra sighed.

"Joe," said his mother, quietly, "is killing himself. He doesn't listen to me, and I don't want to interfere too much."

"Isn't there anything to be done?"

There was a silence and then Joe's mother spoke in a strange personal voice.

"What if *you* could do something."

Myra could hardly speak.

"I?"

"You." A hand caught hers. "Try. He's simply giving his life to the cause."

There was a silence a little while. The tears were wet upon Myra's cheeks.

"Mrs. Blaine."

"Yes, dear."

"Tell me about yourself — what you've been doing—both of you."

And as Mrs. Blaine told her, time and time again Myra laughed softly, or was glad the darkness concealed those unbidden tears.

But as Mrs. Blaine spoke of the attack of Marrin's men, Myra was thrilled.

"But what happened afterward?" she cried. "Isn't he in danger now? Mightn't there be another attack?"

Joe's mother's voice rang.

"Afterward? It was wonderful. The whole neighborhood rose to Joe's side. They even started a subscription to rebuild the press. Oh, the people here are amazing!"

"And the men who mobbed him?"

"Many were arrested, but Joe did not appear against them, and the men from Marrin's were the first to come in and tell of their remorse. As for the thugs and criminals—they don't dare lift their heads. Public opinion is hot against them."

Thus they talked, intimately, sweetly, and at last the elder woman kissed the younger goodnight.

"But, dear, you've been crying!"

"Oh, I'm so glad to be here!" sobbed Myra. "So glad to be with you!"

And even then she had a sense of the greatness and wonder of that day; how new and untapped

forces in her nature were emerging; how the whole seeming of life—"These shows of the night and day"—was changing for her; how life was deepening down to its bitter roots, roots bitter but miraculously sheathed in crystalline springs; in sweet waters, in beauty and love and mystery. It was the finding of her own soul—a power great enough to endure tragedy and come forth to a richer laughter and a wiser loveliness. Only thus does life reveal its meanings and its miracles, and prove that it is an adventure high and fine, ever tending higher, ever more enriched with faith and marvelous strength, and that mirth that meets the future with an expectant smile.

So thinking, so feeling, she grew drowsier, sank deeper—her body tired in every muscle, in every bone—her mind unable to keep awake; and so she faded into the pure rest of sleep.

XI

THE WORKHOUSE

THAT next day was as a dream to Rhona. Not until evening did it become real. Breakfast was brought to her cell, but she did not taste it. Next she was led out by a policeman to the street and packed in the patrol wagon with eight other women. The morning was gray, with a hard sifting snow, and as the wagon bumped over cobblestones, Rhona breathed deep of the keen air.

The ride seemed without end; but next she was in a ferry; and then, last, was hurried into a long gray building on Blackwells Island.

Her cell was fairly large, and contained two cots, one against each wall. She was left disconsolately alone, numb, in despair, and moving about in a dream.

But after supper she found herself locked in with another woman. She sat down on the edge of her cot, in the dim light of the room, and with a sharp glance, half fear, half curiosity, regarded her room-mate. This other was a woman of possibly thirty years, with sallow cheeks, bright burning eyes, and straggly hair. She stood be-

fore the little wall mirror, apparently examining herself. Suddenly she turned:

"What you looking at, kid?"

Rhona averted her eyes.

"I didn't mean—"

"Say," said the other, "ain't I the awful thing? Not a rat or a puff or a dab of rouge allowed in these here premises. I do look a sight—a fright. Gee!" She turned. "You're not so worse. A little pale, kid."

She came over and sat next to Rhona.

"What 'll I call you?"

Rhona shrank. She was a sensitive, ignorant girl, and did not understand this type of woman. Something coarse, familiar, vulgar seemed to grate against her.

"Rhona's my name," she breathed.

"Well, that's cute! Call you Ronie?" She stretched out her arms. "Oh, slats! I'd give my teeth for a cigarette and a Manhattan cocktail. Wouldn't I, though!"

Rhona shuddered.

The woman turned toward her.

"My name's Millie. Now we're pals, eh?" Then she rattled on: "First time in the workhouse? Comes hard at first, doesn't it? Cut off from friends and fun—and ain't the work beastly? Say, Ronie, what's your job in little old New York?"

Rhona swallowed a dull sob.

"I haven't any—we're on strike."

Millie jumped up.

"What, you one of them shirtwaist strikers?"

"Yes."

"Why did they run you in?"

"An officer struck me, and then said I struck him."

"Just like a man! Oh, I know men! Depend upon it, I know the men! So, you were a shirtwaist-maker. How much d'yer earn?"

"Oh, about five or six a week."

"A—*week!*" Millie whistled. "And I suppose ten hours a day, or worse, and I suppose work that would kill an ox."

"Yes," said Rhona, "hard work."

Millie sat down and put an arm about the shrinking girl.

"Say, kiddie, I like you. I'm going to chuck a little horse sense at you. Now you listen to me. My sister worked in a pickle-place over in Pennsy, and she lasted just two years, and then, galloping consumption, and—" She snapped her fingers, her voice became husky. "Poor fool! Two years is the limit where she worked. And who paid the rent? I did. But of course *I* wasn't respectable —oh no! I was a sinner. Well, let me tell you something. In my business a woman can last five to ten years. Do you blame me? And I get clothes, and the eats, and the soft spots, and I live like a lady. . . . That's the thing for you! Why do you wear yourself out—slave-work and strikes and silly business? . . . You'll never get

married. . . . The work will make you a hag in another year or two, and who will want you? And say, you've got to live just once—got to be just downright woman for a little spell, anyway. . . . Come with me, kid . . . my kind of life."

Rhona looked at her terrified. She did not understand. What sort of woman was this? How live in luxury without working? How be downright woman?

"What do you mean?" asked the young girl.

So Millie told her. They went to bed, their light was put out, and neither had a wink of sleep. Rhona lay staring in the darkness and over the room came the soft whisper of Millie bearing a flood of the filth of the underworld. Rhona could not resist it. She lay helpless, quaking with a wild horror. . . . Later she remembered that night in Russia when she and others hid under the corn in a barn while the mob searched over their heads—a moment ghastly with impending mutilation and death—and she felt that this night was more terrible than that. Her girlhood seemed torn to shreds. . . . Dawn broke, a watery glimmer through the high barred window. Rhona rose from her bed, rushed to the door, pulled on the bars, and loosed a fearful shriek. The guard, running down, Millie, leaping forward, both cried:

"What's the matter?"

But the slim figure in the white nightgown fell

down on the floor, and thus earned a few hours in the hospital.

They set her to scrubbing floors next day, a work for which she had neither experience nor strength. Weary, weary day—the large rhythm of the scrubbing-brush, the bending of the back, the sloppy, dirty floors—on and on, minute after minute, on through the endless hours. She tried to work diligently, though she was dizzy and sick, and felt as if she were breaking to pieces. Feverishly she kept on. Lunch was tasteless to her; so was supper; and after supper came Millie.

No one can tell of those nights when the young girl was locked in with a hard prostitute—nights, true, of lessening horror, and so, all the more horrible. As Rhona came to realize that she was growing accustomed to Millie's talk—even to the point of laughing at the jokes—she was aghast at the dark spaces beneath her and within her. She was becoming a different sort of being—she looked back on the hard-toiling girl, who worked so faithfully, who tried to study, who had a quiet home, whose day was an innocent routine of toil and meals and talk and sleep, as on some one who was beautiful and lovely, but now dead. In her place was a sharp, cynical young woman. Well for Rhona that her sentence was but five days!

The next afternoon she was scrubbing down

the long corridor between the cells when the matron came, jangling her keys.

"Some one here for you," said the matron.

Rhona leaped up.

"My mother?" she cried out, in a piercing voice.

"See here," said the matron, "you want to go easy—and only five minutes, mind you."

"My mother?" Rhona repeated, her heart near to bursting.

"No—some one else. Come along."

Rhona followed, half choking. The big door was unlocked before her and swung open; she peered out. It was Joe and Myra.

Seeing these faces of friends suddenly recalled her to her old world, to the struggle, the heroism, the strike, and, filled with a sense of her imprisonment and its injustice, she rushed blindly out into the open arms of Myra and was clutched close, close.

And then she sobbed, wept for minutes, purifying tears. And suddenly she had an inspiration, a flash of the meaning of her martyrdom, how it could be used as a fire and a torch to kindle and lead the others.

She lifted up her face.

"You tell the girls," she cried, "it's perfectly wonderful to be here. It's all right. Just you tell them it's all right. Any of them would be glad to do it!"

And then the matron, who was listening, stepped forward.

"Time's up!"

There was one kiss, one hug, and the brave girl was led away. The door slammed her in.

Joe and Myra looked at each other, awed, thrilled. Tears trickled down Myra's face.

"Oh," she cried low, "isn't it lovely? Isn't it wonderful?"

He spoke softly.

"The day of miracles isn't over. Women keep on amazing me. Come!"

Quietly they walked out into the warm, sunshiny day. Streaks of snow were vanishing in visible steam. The sky was a soft blue, bulbous with little puffs of cloud. Myra felt an ineffable peace. Rhona's heroism had filled her with a new sense of human power. She longed to speak with Joe—she longed, as they stood on the ferry, and glided softly through the wash and sway of the East River, to share her sweet emotions with him. But he had pulled out a note-book and was busily making jottings. He seemed, if anything, more worn than ever, more tired. He was living on his nerves. The gray face was enough to bring tears to a woman's eyes, and the lank, ill-clothed form seemed in danger of thinning away to nothingness. So Myra said nothing, but kept looking at him, trying to save him by her strength of love, trying to send out those warm currents and wrap him up and infuse him with life and light and joy.

All the way out he had been silent, preoccu-

pied. In fact, all these three days he had been preoccupied—toiling terribly early and late, busy, the center of a swarm of human activities, his voice everywhere, his pen in his hand. Meals he ate at his desk while he wrote, and sleep was gained in little snatches. Myra had been there to watch him, there to help him. Since that night in the court, she had come early and stayed until ten in the evening, doing what work she could. And there was much to be done—she found a profitable task in instructing new recruits in the rules of picketing—and also in investigating cases of need. These took her to strange places. She had vistas of life she had not dreamed to be true—misery she had thought confined to novels, to books like *Les Misérables*. It was all wonderful and strange and new. She was beginning to really know the life of the Greater Number—the life of the Nine-Tenths—and as she got used to the dust, the smells, and the squalor, she found daily all the richness of human nature. It was dramatic, absorbing, real. Where was it leading her? She hardly knew yet. The strangeness had not worn off.

She had been watching Joe, and she felt that he was hardly aware of her presence. He took her and her work as a matter of course. And this did not embitter her, for she felt that the time had passed for privileges, that this was a season in Joe's life when he belonged to a mass of the people, to a great cause, and that she had no right to

any part of his life. He was so deep in it, so overwrought, that it was best to let him alone, to keep him free from the responsibility of personal relationships, not to burden him with added emotionalism. And so she accepted the rule of Joe's mother—to do Joe's bidding without question, to let him have his way, waiting patiently for the time when he would need and cry out for the personal. When that time came the two women were ready to help to heal, to nurse—to bind the wounds and soothe the troubled heart, and rebuild the broken spirit. It might be, of course, that in the end he would shut Myra out; that was a contingency she had to face; but she thought that, whatever came, she was getting herself equal to it.

They left the ferry and walked over to Second Avenue and took an elevated train. Then Joe spoke—leaning near, his voice gentle:

"Myra."

"Yes, Joe."

"I've been wondering."

"What?"

"About this strike business. Wondering if it isn't mostly waste."

She found herself saying eagerly:

"But what else can the people do?"

He shook his head.

"In this country if men only voted right . . . only had the right sort of government. . . . What are they gaining this way? It's too costly."

"But how are they going to vote right?"

"Education!" he exclaimed. "Training! We must train the children in democracy. We must get at the children."

Myra was amazed.

"Then you think your work is . . . of the wrong sort?"

"No! no!" he said. "Everything helps—we must try every way—I may not be fit for any other way than this. But I'm beginning to think it isn't of the best sort. Maybe it's the only thing to do to-day, however."

She began to throb with a great hope.

"Don't you think," she cried, "you ought to go off and take a rest and think it over? You know you might go into politics, to Congress, or something—then you could really do something."

He looked at her with surprise.

"How you're thinking these days!" he mused. But then he went on very wearily. "Rest? Myra," his voice sank, "if I ever come out of this alive, I'll rest—rest deep, rest deep. But there's no end—no end to it. . . ."

He reverted to the problem of the strike.

"Don't you think there's right on the other side, too? Don't you think many of the employers are doing all they can under present conditions? We're asking too much. We want men to change their methods before we change conditions. Who can do it? I tell you, I may be wronging as fine a lot of men as there are."

"Then why did you go into it?" she asked, quickly.

"I didn't. It came to me. It bore me under. But I haven't made a mistake this time. By chance I'm on the *righter* side, the better side. When it comes to the women in industry, there's no question. It is killing the future to work them this way—it is intolerable, inhuman, insane. We must stop it—and as we *don't* vote right, we *must* strike. A strike is justified these days—will be, until there's some other way of getting justice. Anyway, this time," he said, fiercely, "I'm right. But I'm wondering about the future. I'm wondering. . . ."

He said nothing further, digging again at his notes. But Myra now nourished a hope, a secret throbbing hope . . . the first ray of a new and more confident morning.

XII

CONFIDENT MORNING

MYRA moved down to West Tenth Street. She found a neat, little hall bedroom in one of the three-story brick houses—a little white room, white-curtained, white-walled, with white counterpane on the iron bed. She was well content with these narrow quarters, content because it was near Joe, content because it saved money (her savings were dwindling rapidly these days), and finally content because she had shifted the center of her interests to a different set of facts. She was both too busy and too aroused to be sensitive about running water and the minor comforts. Her whole being was engrossed in large activities, and she found with astonishment how many things she could do without. What previously had seemed so important, poetry, music, dress, quiet, ease, now became little things lost in a host of new big events. And, curiously enough, she found a new happiness in this freedom from superfluities—a sense of range and independence new to her. For at this time such things actually were superfluous, though the

time was to come again when music and poetry had a new and heightened meaning.

But during these days of the strike she was a quite free woman, snatching her sleep and her food carelessly, and putting in her time in spending heart and soul on the problem in hand. She dressed simply, in shirtwaist and skirt, and she moved among the people as if she were one of them, and with no sense of contrast. In fact, Myra was changing, changing rapidly. Her work called for a new set of powers, and without hesitation these new powers rose within her, emerged and became a part of her character. She became executive, quick, stepped into any situation that confronted her, knew when to be mild, when to be sharp, sensed where sympathy was needed, and also where sympathy merely softened and ruined. Her face, too, followed this inner change. Soft lines merged into something more vivid. She was usually pale, and her sweet, small mouth had a weary droop, but her eyes were keen and living, and lit with vital force.

She began to see that a life of ease and a life of extreme toil were both equally bad—that each choked off possibilities. She knew then that women of her type walked about with hidden powers unused, their lives narrowed and blighted, negative people who only needed some great test, some supreme task, to bring out those hidden forces, which, gushing through the soul, over-

flowing, would make of them characters of abounding vitality. She felt the glory of men and women who go about the world bubbling over with freshness and zest and life, warming the lives they move among, spreading by quick contagion their faith and virility. She longed to be such a person—to train herself in that greatest of all the arts—the touching of other lives, drawing a music from long-disused heart-strings, rekindling, reanimating, the torpid spirit. It was her search for more *life*—richer, thicker, happier, more intense.

Her model was Joe's mother. It seemed to her that Joe's mother had met life and conquered it, and so would never grow old. She never found the older woman soured or bitter or enfeebled. Even about death there was no flinching.

"Don't you think I know," said Joe's mother, "that there is something precious in me that isn't going to go with the body? Just look at this body! That's just what's happening already! I'm too young to die. And besides I know one or two people whom I lost years ago—too precious to be lost—I've faith in them."

This, then, is the greatest victory of life: to treat death as a mere incident in the adventure; an emigration to a new country; a brief and tragic "auf wiedersehen." It has its pang of parting, and its pain of new birth—all birth is a struggle full of pain—but it is the only door to the future. Well for Joe's mother that her hand

was ready to grasp the dark knob and turn it when the time came.

Once as she and Joe's mother were snatching a lunch together in the kitchen, the elder woman spoke softly:

"Myra, you're a great girl!" (She persisted in calling Myra a girl, though Myra kept telling her she was nearly thirty-three and old enough to be dignified.) "What will I ever do without you when the strike is over?"

Myra smiled.

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Yes, and getting worse, Myra!"

Myra flushed with joy.

"I'm glad. I'm very glad."

Joe's mother watched her a little.

"How have you been feeling, Myra?"

"I?—" Myra was surprised. "Oh, I'm all right! I haven't time to be unwell."

"You really think you're all right, then?"

"Oh, I know it! This busy life is doing me good."

"It does most of us good." She changed the subject.

Myra felt, with great happiness, that she was coming into harmony with Joe's mother. She would have been quite amazed, however, to know that Joe's mother was secretly struggling to adjust herself. For Joe's mother could not help thinking that the time might come when Joe and Myra would marry, and she was schooling herself

for this momentous change. She kept telling herself: "There is no one in the world I ought to love more than the woman that Joe loves and weds." And yet it was hard to release her son, to take that life which had for years been closest to her, and had been partly in her hands, relinquish it and give it over into the keeping of another. There were times, however, when she pitied Myra, pitied her because Joe was engrossed in his work and had no emotions or thoughts to spare. And she wondered at such times whether Joe would ever marry, whether he would ever be willing to make his life still more complex. She watched Myra closely, with growing admiration; saw the changes in her, the faithful struggle, the on-surging power, and she thought:

"If it's to be any one, I know no one I should love more."

There were times, however, when she mentally set Myra side by side with Sally, to the former's overshadowing. Sally was so clean-cut, direct, such a positive character. She was hardy and self-contained, and would never be dependent. Her relationships with Joe always implied interdependence, a perfect give and take, a close yet easy comradeship which enabled her at any time to go her own way and work her own will. Sometimes Joe's mother felt that Sally was a woman of the future, and that, with such, marriage would become a finer and freer union. However, her imaginative match-making made her smile, and

she thought: "Joe won't pick a mate with his head. The thing will just happen to him—or not." And as she came to know Myra better, she began to feel that possibly a woman who would take Joe away from his work, instead of involving him deeper, would, in the end, be best for him. Such a woman would mean peace, relaxation, diversion. She was greatly concerned over Joe's absorption in the strike, and once, when it appeared that the struggle might go on endlessly, she said to Myra:

"Sometimes I think Joe puts life off too much, pushing his joys into the future, not always remembering that he will never be more alive than now, and that the days are being lopped off."

Myra had a little table of her own, near the door, and this table, when she was there, was always a busy center. The girls liked her, liked to talk with her, were fond of her musical voice and her quiet manners. Some even got in the habit of visiting her room with her and having quiet talks about their lives. Sally, however, did not share this fondness for Myra. She felt that Myra was an intruder—that Myra was interposing a wall between her and Joe—and she resented the intrusion. She could not help noticing that Joe was becoming more and more impersonal with her, but then, she thought, "people are not persons to him any more; he's swallowed up in the cause." Luckily she was

too busy during the day, too tired at night, to brood much on the matter. However, one evening at committee meeting, her moment of realization came. The committee, including Myra and Joe and herself and some five others, were sitting about the hot stove, discussing the call of a Local on the East Side for a capable organizer.

"It's hard to spare any one," mused Joe, "and yet—" He looked about the circle. "There's Miss Craig and—Miss Heffer."

Both Myra and Sally turned pale and trembled a little. Each felt as if the moment had come when he would shut one or the other out of his life. Sally spoke in a low voice:

"I'm pretty busy right here, Mr. Joe."

"I know," he reflected. "And I guess Miss Craig could do it."

He opened the stove door, took the tiny shovel, stuck it into the coal-box, and threw some fresh coal on the lividly red embers. Then he stood up and gazed round the circle again.

"Sally," he said, "it's *your* work—you'll have to go."

She bowed her head.

"You're sure," she murmured, "I'm not needed here?"

"Needed?" he mused. "Yes. But needed more over there!"

She looked up at him and met his eyes. Her own were pleading with him.

"Surely?"

"Surely, Sally. We're not in this game for fun, are we?"

"I'll do as you say," she breathed.

Her head began to swim; she felt as if she would break down and cry. She arose.

"I'll be right back."

She groped her way through the inner rooms to the kitchen. Joe's mother was reading.

"Mrs. Blaine. . . ."

"Sally! What's the matter?"

Joe's mother arose.

"I'm going . . . going to another Local. . . . I'm leaving here to-night . . . for good and always."

Joe's mother drew her close, and Sally sobbed openly.

"It's been my home here—the first I've had in years—but I'll never come back."

"Oh, you must come back."

"No. . . ." she looked up bravely. "Mrs. Blaine."

"Yes, Sally."

"He doesn't need me any more; he's outgrown me; he doesn't need any one now."

What could Joe's mother say?

"Sally!" she cried, and then she murmured: "It's you who don't need any one, Sally. You're strong and independent. You can live your own live. And you've helped make Joe strong. Wait, and see."

And she went on to speak of Sally's work, of

her influence in the place, of the joy she brought to others, and finally Sally said:

"Forgive me for coming to you like a baby."

"Oh, it's fine of you to come to me!"

"So," cried Sally, "good-by."

She found her hat and coat and slipped away, not daring to say good-by to Joe. But as she went through the dark winter night she realized how one person's happiness is often built on another's tragedy. And so Sally went, dropping for the time being out of Joe's life.

There was one event that took place two weeks after Myra's coming, which she did not soon forget. It was the great mass-meeting to celebrate the return of Rhona and some others who had also been sent to the workhouse. Myra and Joe sat together. After the music, the speeches, Rhona stepped forward, slim, pale, and very little before that gigantic auditorium. She spoke simply.

"I was picketing on Great Jones Street. A man came up and struck me. I had him arrested. But in court he said I struck him, and the judge sent me to Blackwells Island. I had to scrub floors. But it was only for five days. I think we ought all to be glad to go to the workhouse, because that will help women to be free and help the strikers. I'm glad I went. It wasn't anything much."

They cheered her, for they saw before them a

young heroine, victorious, beloved, ideal. But when Myra called at Hester Street, a week later, Rhona's mother had something else to say.

"Rhona? Well, you had ought to seen her when we first landed! Ah! she was a beauty, my Rhona—such cheeks, such hair, such eyes—laughing all the time. But now—ach!" She sighed dreadfully. "So it goes. Only, I wished she wasn't always so afraid—afraid to go out . . . afraid . . . so nervous . . . so . . . different."

Myra never forgot this. It sent her back to her work with wiser and deeper purpose. And so she fought side by side with Joe through the blacks weeks of that January. It seemed strange that Joe didn't go under. He loomed about the place, a big, stoop-shouldered, gaunt man, with tragic gray face and melancholy eyes and deepening wrinkles. All the tragedy and pathos and struggle of the strike were marked upon his features. His face summed up the sorrows of the thirty thousand. Myra sometimes expected him to collapse utterly. But he bore on, from day to day, doing his work, meeting his committees, and getting out the paper.

Here, too, Myra found she could help him. She insisted on writing the strike articles, and as Jacob Izon was also writing, there was only the editorial for Joe to do. The paper did not miss an issue, and as it now had innumerable canvassers among the strikers, its circulation gained rapidly—rising finally to 20,000.

Even at this time Joe seemed to take no special notice of Myra. But one slushy, misty night, when the gas-lamps had rainbow haloes, and gray figures sluff-sluffed through the muddy snow, she accompanied Joe on one of his fund-raising tours. They entered the side door of a dingy saloon, passed through a yellow hall, and emerged finally on the platform of a large and noisy rear room where several hundred members of the Teamsters' Union were holding a meeting. Gas flared above the rough and elemental faces, and Myra felt acutely self-conscious under that concentrated broadside of eyes. She sat very still, flushing, and feebly smiling, while the outdoor city men blew the air white and black with smoke and raised the temperature to the sweating-point.

Joe was introduced; the men clapped; and then he tried hard to arouse their altruism—to get them to donate to the strike out of their union funds. However, his speech came limp and a little stale. The applause was good-natured but feeble. Joe sat down, sighing, and smiling grimly.

An amazing yet natural thing happened. The Chairman arose, leaned over his table, and said:

"You have heard from Mr. Joe Blaine; now you will hear from the other member of the committee."

Not for some seconds—not until the stamping of feet rose to a fury of sound—did Myra realize that *she* was the other member. She had a sense

of being drained of life, of losing her breath. Instinctively she glanced at Joe, and saw that he was looking at her a little dubiously, a little amusedly. What could she do? She had never addressed a meeting in her life; she had never stood on her feet before a group of men; she had nothing learned, nothing to say. But how could she excuse herself, how withdraw, especially in the face of Joe's challenging gaze?

The stamping increased; the men clapped; and there were shouts:

"Come ahead! Come on! That's right, Miss."

It was a cruel test, a wicked predicament. All the old timidity and sensitiveness of her nature held her back, made her tremble, and bathed her face in perspiration. But a new Myra kept saying:

"Joe didn't rouse them. Some one must."

She set her feet on the floor, and the deafening thunder of applause seemed to raise her. She took a step forward. And then with a queer motion she raised her hand. There was an appalling silence, a silence more dreadful than the noise, and Myra felt her tongue dry to its root.

"I—" she began, "I want to say—tell you—" She paused, startled by the queer sound of her own voice. She could not believe it was herself speaking; it seemed some one else. And then, sharply, a wonderful thing took place. A surge of strength filled her. She took a good look around. Her brain cleared; her heart slowed.

It was the old trick of facing the worst, and finding the strength was there to meet it and turn it to the best. All at once Myra exulted. She would take these hundreds of human beings and *swing them.* She could do it.

Her voice was rich, vibrating, melodious.

"I want to tell you a little about this strike—what it means. I want to tell you what the girls and women of this city are capable of—what heroism, what toil, what sacrifice and nobility. It is not the easiest thing to live a normal woman's life. You know that. You know how your mothers or wives or sisters have been slaving and stinting—what pain is theirs, what burdens, what troubles. But think of the life of a girl of whom I shall tell you—a young girl by the name of Rhona Hemlitz."

She went on. She told the story of Rhona's life, and then quietly she turned to her theme.

"You understand now, don't you? Are you going to help these girls *win* their fight?"

The walls trembled with what followed—stamping, shouting, clapping. Myra sat down, her cheeks red, her eyes brilliant. And then suddenly a big hand closed over hers and a deep voice whispered:

"Myra, you set yourself free then. You are a new woman!"

That was all. She had shocked Joe with the fact of the new Myra, and now the new Myra had come to stay. They raised twenty-five

dollars that night. From that time on Myra was a free and strong personality, surprising even Joe's mother, who began to realize that this was not the woman to take Joe from his work, but one who would fight shoulder to shoulder with him until the very end.

In the beginning of February the strike began to fade out. Employers right and left were making compromises with the girls, and here and there girls were deserting the union and going back. The office at West Tenth Street became less crowded, fewer girls came, fewer committees met. There was one night when the work was all done at eleven o'clock, and this marked the reappearance of normal conditions.

It was a day or two later that a vital experience came to Joe. Snow was falling outside, and it was near twilight, and in the quiet Joe was busy at his desk. Then a man came in, well, but carelessly dressed, his face pinched and haggard, his eyes bloodshot, his hair in stray tufts over his wrinkled forehead.

"I want to see you a minute, Mr. Blaine."

The voice was shaking with passion.

"Sit down," said Joe, and the man took the seat beside him.

"I'm Mr. Lissner—Albert Lissner—I was the owner of the Lissner Shirtwaist Company."

Joe looked at him.

"Lissner? Oh yes, over on Eighth Street."

The man went on:

"Mr. Blaine, I had eighty girls working for me. . . . I always did all I could for them . . . but there was fierce competition, and I was just skimping along, and I had to pay small wages; . . . but I was good to those girls. . . . They didn't want to strike . . . the others made them. . . ."

Joe was stirred.

"Yes, I know . . . many of the shops were good. . . ."

"Well," said Lissner, with a shaking, bitter smile, "you and your strike have ruined me. . . . I'm a ruined man. . . . My family and I have lost everything. . . . And, it's killed my wife."

His face became terrible—very white, and the eyes staring—he went on in a hollow, low voice: "I—I've lost *all*."

There was a silence; then Lissner spoke queerly:

"I happen to know about you, Mr. Blaine. . . . You were the head of that printing-place that burnt down. . . ."

Joe felt a shock go through him, as if he had seen a ghost. . . .

"Well, maybe you did all you could for your men; . . . maybe you were a good employer. . . . Yet see what came of it. . . ." Suddenly Lissner's voice rose passionately: "And yet you had the nerve to come around and get after us fellows, who were just as good as you. There are bad employers, and bad employees, too—bad

people of every kind—but maybe most people are good. You couldn't help what happened to you; neither can we help it if the struggle is too fierce—we're victims, too. It's conditions, it's life. We can't change the world in a day. And yet you—after your fire—come here and ruin us."

Joe was shaken to his depths. Lissner had made an overstatement, and yet he had thrown a new light on the strike, and he had reminded Joe of his long-forgotten guilt. And suddenly Joe knew. All are guilty; all share in the corruption of the world—the laborer anxious for mass-tyranny and distrustful of genius, the aristocrat afraid of soiling his hands, the capitalist intent on power and wealth. the artist neglectful of all but a narrow artifice, each one limited by excess or want, by intellect or passion, by vanity or lust, and all struggling with one another to wrest some special gift for himself. In the intricacy of civilization there are no real divisions, but every man is merely a brain cell, a nerve, in the great organism, and what one man gains, some other must lose. It was a world he got a glimpse of quite different from that sharp twofold world of the workers and the money-power, a world of infinite gradations, a world merely the child of the past, where high and low were pushed by the resistless pressure of environment, and lives were shaped by birth, chance, training, position, and a myriad, myriad indefinable forces.

All of this confused him at first, and it had been so long since he had dealt with theories that it was some time before the chaos cleared, some time before the welter of new thought took shape in his mind. But it made him humble, receptive, teachable, it made him more kindly and more gentle. He began a mental stock-taking; he began to examine into the lives about him.

Myra was there—the new Myra, a Myra with daily less to do in that office, and with more and more time to think. From her heart was lifted the hard hand of circumstance, releasing a tenderness and yearning which flooded her brain. It was a tragic time for her. She knew now that her services were nearly at an end, and that she must go her own way. She would not be near Joe any longer—she would not have the heart's ease of his presence—she could no longer brood over him and protect him.

It seemed to her that she could not bear the future. Her love for Joe rose and overwhelmed her. She became self-conscious before him, paled when he spoke to her, and when he was away her longing for him was insupportable. She wanted him now—all her life cried out for him—all the woman in her went out to mate with this man. The same passion that had drawn her from the country to his side now swayed and mastered her.

"Joe! Joe!" her soul cried, "take me now! This is too much for me to bear!"

And more and more the thought of his health oppressed her. If she only had the power to take him to her breast, draw him close in her arms, mother him, heal him, smooth the wrinkles, kiss the droop of the big lips, and pour her warm and infinite love into his heart. That surely must save him—love surely would save this man.

She began to scheme and dream—to plot ways of getting about him, of routing him out, of tearing him from his rut.

And then one afternoon at two she risked her all. It was an opportune time. Joe—wonder of wonders—was doing nothing, but sitting back like a gray wreck, with his feet crossed on his desk, and a vile cigar in his mouth. It was the first cigar in ages, and he puffed on it and brooded dreamily.

Myra came over, sat down beside him, and spoke airily.

"Hello, Joe!"

"Why, hello, Myra!" he cried. "What d'ye mean by helloing me?"

"I'm glad to meet you."

"Same to you."

"I've come back from the country, Joe."

"So I see."

"Do you?"

"Haven't I eyes?"

"Well," she said, flushed, bending forward, "Joe Blaine, where have your eyes been these five weeks?"

"They were on strike!" he said, promptly.

"Well," she said, "the strike's over!"

They laughed together as they had not since far and far in the beginning of things.

Joe leaned near.

"Myra," he said, "I need an airing. Take me out and shake me out! Oh!" he stretched his arms above his head. "Have I been hibernating and is it springtime again?"

Myra hesitated.

"Joe."

"Yes, ma'am!"

"I want you to take me somewhere."

"I will."

"To—the printery—I want to see it again."

"Go 'long wid you! Marty Briggs and me are bad friends, see?"

She reveled in this new gaiety of his.

"Joe, you're waking up. *Please* take me!"

"Put on your hat, your coat, and your little black gloves, young woman. Me for the printery!"

They went out together, glad as young children. The world was sheathed in a hard ice-coated snow; icicles dangled from every sill and cornice; the skies were melting blue, and the sun flashed along every surface. It was a world of flashing fire, of iridescent sunbursts. Through the clean, tingling air they walked, arm in arm, the stir of a new life in their hearts.

"Joe," said Myra, "I want you to signalize

your resurrection by a great sacrifice to the gods."

"I'm ready. Expound!"

"I want you to buy a new hat."

He took off his hat and examined it.

"What's the matter with this?"

"It's like yourself, Joe—worn out!"

"But the boys of Eighty-first Street won't know me in a new hat."

"Never mind the boys of Eighty-first Street. Do as I tell you."

"Aw, Myra, give me a day to steel my heart and strengthen my sinews. Wait till we come back."

"And you'll get it then?"

"Sure as fate."

"Well — just this once you'll have your way!"

So they took the elevated to Seventy-sixth Street and walked through the old neighborhood to the printery. The familiar streets, which secretly bore the print of every size shoe he had worn since he was a tiny toddling fellow, made him meditative, almost sad.

"It seems ages since I was here!" he remarked. "And yet it's like yesterday. What have I been doing? Dreaming? Will I walk into the printery, and will you come in with the 'Landing of the Pilgrims'?"

Myra laughed, both glad and sad.

"I should have charged you more," said Joe,

brusquely. "Fifty cents was too little for that job."

"I told you it would ruin your business, Joe."

Strangely then they thought of the fire . . . her order had been his last piece of business before the tragedy.

They walked east on Eighty-first Street and stopped before the old loft building. A new sign was riveted on the bulletin-board in the doorway.

MARTIN BRIGGS
SUCCESSOR TO
JOE BLAINE & HIS MEN.

Joe looked at it, and started.

"It's no dream, Myra," he sighed. "Times have changed, and we, too, have changed."

Then they went up the elevator to the clash and thunder on the eighth floor. And they felt more and more strange, double, as it were—the old Myra and the old Joe walking with the new Myra and the new Joe. Myra felt a queerness about her heart, a subtle sense of impending events; of great dramatic issues. Something that made her want to cry.

Then they stood a moment before the dirty door, and Joe said:

"Shall I? Shall I rouse 'em with the bell? Shall I break in on their peaceful lives?"

"Rouse away!" cried Myra. "Your hour has struck!"

He pulled the door, the bell rang sharply, and they stepped in. As of old, the tremble, the clatter, the flash of machines, the damp smell of printed sheets, swallowed them up—made them a quivering part of the place. And how little it had changed! They stood, almost choking with the unchanging change of things. As if the fire had never been! As if Tenth Street had never been!

Then at once the spell was broken. A pressman spied Joe and loosed a yell:

"*It's the old man!*"

His press stopped; his neighbors' presses stopped; as the yell went down the room, "Joe! Joe! The old man!" press after press paused until only the clatter and swing of the overhead belting was heard. And the men came running up.

"Mr. Joe! Mr. Joe! Shake! For God's sake, give me a grip! This is great for sore eyes! Where you been keeping yourself? Ain't he the limit? He's the same old penny! Look at him —even his hat's the same!"

Joe shook hand after hand, until his own was numb. They crowded about him, they flung their fondness at him, and he stood, his eyes blinded with tears, his heart rent in his breast, and a new color climbing to his cheeks.

Then suddenly a loud voice cried:

"What's the matter? What does this mean?"

And Marty Briggs emerged from the office.

"Hello, Marty!" cried Joe.

Marty stood dumfounded; then he came with a rush.

"Joe! You son-of-a-gun! Beg pardon, Miss! I ain't seen him for a lifetime!"

"And how goes it, Marty? How goes it, Marty?"

"Tip-top; busy as beavers. But, say," he leaned over and whispered, "I've found a secret."

"What is it, Marty?"

"You can't run a business with your hands or lungs or your manners—you need gray stuff up here."

The reception was a great success, full of cross-questions, of bartered news—as the arrival of new babies christened Joe or Josephine, the passing of old babies in the last birth of all, the absence of old faces, the presence of new ones. Glad talk and rapid, and only cut short by the urgency of business.

They sang him out with a "He's a jolly good fellow," and he emerged on the street with Myra, his eyes dripping.

Myra spoke softly.

"Joe."

"Yes, Myra."

"There's one more thing I want you to do for me."

"Name it."

"I want to walk with you in the Park."

He looked at her strangely, breathlessly.

"*In the Ramble, Myra?*"

She met his gaze.

"*In the Ramble, Joe.*"

Silently, with strange, beating hearts and foreglimmer of beauty and wonder and loveliness, they walked west to the Park, and entered that Crystal Palace. For every branch, every twig, every stone and rail had its pendent ice and icicle, and the strong sun smote the world with flakes of flame. The trees were showers of rainbow-flashing glory; now and then an icicle dropped like a dart of fire, and the broad lawns were sheets of dazzle. Earth was glittering, fresh, new, decked out in unimaginable jewels under the vast and melting blue skies. The day was tender and clear and vigorous, tingling with life.

They followed the curve of the walk, they crossed the roadway, they climbed the hill, they walked the winding path of the Ramble.

"You remember that morning?" murmured Joe, a music waking in his heart, his pulses thronged with a new beauty.

"Remember it?" Myra whispered. "Yes, Joe, I remember it."

"That is the very bench we sat on."

"That is the bench."

"And that is the little pond."

"That is the little pond."

"And this is the spot."

"This is the spot."

They sat down on that bench in the crystal wilderness, a man and woman alone in the blue-skied spaces, among the tree-trunks, and the circle of earth. And then to Myra came an inexpressible moment of agony and longing and love. She had struggled months; she had stayed away; and then she had come back, and merged her life in the life of this man. And she could bear this no longer! Oh, Joe, will you never speak? Will you never come to your senses?

More and more color was rising to his face, and his hands in his lap were trembling. He tried to speak naturally—but his voice was odd and unreal.

"Myra."

"Yes," tremulously.

"You must have thought me a brute."

"I thought—you were busy, overworked."

"So I was. I was swallowed up—swallowed up."

There was a silence, in which they heard little gray sparrows twittering in the sunlight.

"Myra."

He hardly heard her "yes."

"There's been a miracle in my life this year."

"Yes?"

"The way you came down and took hold and made good."

"Thank you," very faintly.

"It was the biggest thing that came my way."

Silence.

"I was noticing it, Myra, out of the tail of my eye."

Myra tried to laugh. It sounded more like a dull sob.

"I haven't time to be polite."

"Don't want you to," Myra blurted.

"Strange," said Joe, "how things come about. Hello, Mr. Squirrel! Want a peanut? None on the premises. Sorry. Good-day!"

He leaned over, picked a bit of ice, and flung it in the air.

"Myra," he muttered. "I need a rest."

"You do," almost inaudible.

"I need— Didn't I say, no peanuts? No means no! Good-day!"

He turned about laughing.

"What do you think of that for a pesky little animal?"

"Joe!" she cried in her agony.

Joe said nothing, but stared, and a great sob shook him and escaped his lips.

"Myra!!"

He had her in his arms; he kissed her on the lips—that new kiss, sealing those others. And the wonderful moment came and went; the moment when two flames leap into one fire; when two lives dashing upon each other blend into one wonderful torrent. They did not mind the publicity of the place that afternoon; they were quite oblivious of the world. They were in another realm, breathing another air, treading a

different earth. It was too sacred for words, too miraculous for aught but the beating of their living hearts, the pulse of singing blood, the secret in their brains. Their years fell away. They were youth itself, dabbling with the miracles of the world; they were boy and girl, new-created man and woman. The world was a garden, and they were alone in that garden, and nothing but beauty was in that place. They had each other to behold and hear and touch and commune with. That was enough. . . .

"Joe," said Myra, when the first glory had faded and they were conversing sweetly, "I made up my mind to save you, and I did!"

"Wonderful woman! And you're sure now you don't mind me—the way I'm constructed in the cranium and all that?"

"I love you, Joe!" She was as happy as a woman could be.

"I'm a powerful idiot, Myra."

"So am I."

"Well," he mused, "you're taking your chances. Suppose I go off into another strike or something?"

"I'll go with you."

"Myra," he said, "then let's go home and tell mother."

They were as happy as children. They were well satisfied with the world. In fact, they found it an amazingly good place. Every face

that passed seemed touched with beauty and high moral purpose, and the slate of wrong and injustice and bitterness had been sponged clean.

"Oh, Myra," cried Joe, "isn't it great to know that we have it in us to go plumb loony once in a while? Isn't it great?"

And so they made their way home, and walked tiptoe to the kitchen, and stood hand in hand before Joe's mother. She wheeled.

"Joe! Myra!"

Joe gulped heavily.

"I've brought you a daughter, mother, the loveliest one I could find!"

Myra sobbed, and started forward—Joe's mother grasped her in a tight hug, tears running fast.

"It's about time, Joe," she cried, "it's just about time."

XIII

THE CITY

OVER the city the Spring cast its subtle spell. The skies had a more fleeting blue and softer clouds and more golden sun. Here and there on a window-sill a new red geranium plant was set out to touch the stone walls with the green earth's glory. The salt breath of the sea, wandering up the dusty avenues, called the children of men to new adventures—hinted of far countries across the world, of men going down to the sea in ships, of traffic and merchandise in fairer climes, of dripping forest gloom and glittering peaks, of liquid-lisping brooks and the green scenery of the open earth.

Restlessness seized the hearts of men and the works of men. From the almshouses and the jails emerged the vagrants, stopped overnight to meet their cronies in dives and saloons, and next day took the freight to the blooming West, or tramped by foot the dust of the roads that leave the city and go ribboning over the shoulder and horizon of the world. Windows were flung open, and the fresh sweet air came in to make the babies laugh and the women wistful and the men lazy.

Factories droned with machines that seemed to grate against their iron fate. And of a night, now, the parks, the byways, and the waterside were the haunts of young lovers—stealing out together, arms round each other's waists—the future of the world in their trembling hands.

The air was full of the rumor of great things. Now, perchance, human nature at last was going to reveal itself, the love and hope and comradeliness and joy tucked away so deep in its interlinings. Now, possibly, the streets were going to be full of singing, and the housetops were going to rejoice with the mellower stars. Anything was possible. Did not earth set an example, showing how out of a hard dead crust and a forlorn and dry breast she could pour her new oceans of million-glorious life? If the dead tree could blossom and put forth green leaves, what dead soul need despair?

Swinging and swaying and gliding, the great white Sound liner came up on the morning and swept her flag-flapped way down the shining river. Her glad whistle released her buoyant joy to the city, and the little tugs and the ferries answered with their barks and their toots. Up she came, triple-decked, her screw swirling in the green salt water, her smoke curling lustrous in the low-hung sun. She passed Blackwells Island, she swung easily beneath the great span of the Fifty-ninth Street bridge, and gave "good-morning" to the lower city.

On a side-deck, leaning over the rail, stood a man and a woman. The man was strong, tan-faced, his eyes bright with fresh power. The woman was rosy-cheeked and exquisite in her new beauty. For the miracle of Spring which changed the earth had changed Myra and Joe. They too had put forth power and life, blossom and new green leaves. They had gone to the earth to be remade; they had given themselves over to the great physician, Nature; they had surrendered to the soil and the sun and the air. Earth had absorbed them, infolded them, and breathed anew in their spirits her warmth, her joy, her powerful peace. They had run bare-headed in the sun; they had climbed, panting, the jutting mountainside; they had taken the winds of the world on the topmost peak; they had romped in the woods and played in the meadow. And then, too, they had fed well, and rested much, and been content with the generous world.

And in that health and peace of nature at last to Joe had come the great awakening of his life. The mental stock-taking he had begun on the day when Lissner had spoken to him, reached there its climax; the confusion cleared; the chaos took wonderful new shape.

And he was amazed to see how he had changed and grown. He looked back on the man who had gone down to West Tenth Street as on a callow and ignorant youth, enthusiastic, but crude and untried. Back through those past

months he went with the search-light of introspection, and then at last he knew. He had gone down to Greenwich Village crammed with theories; he had set to work as if he were a sheltered scientist in a quiet laboratory, where an experiment could be carried through, and there suddenly he had been confronted with Facts! Facts! those queer unbudgable things! Facts in a fierce stampede that engulfed and swept him along and put all his dreams to a galloping test, a test wherein he had even forgotten his dreams.

He had gone the way of all reformers, first the explosive arousal, then the theory, then the test.

He went over the Greenwich Village experience with Myra:

"Why," he laughed, "I expected to do great things. Whereas, look, I have done *nothing*. This strike ends in a little bettering, and a few people read my paper. It's just a little stir, hardly a dent—a few atoms set into motion. How slow! how slow! *Patience!* That's the word I've learned! It will take worlds of time; it will take a multitude striving; it will take unnumbered forces—education, health-work, eugenics, town-planning, the rise of women, philanthropy, law—a thousand thousand dawning powers. Oh, we are only at the faint beginnings of things!"

And he thought of the books he had read, and the theories of which he had been so sure.

"But," he exclaimed, "was my diagnosis

correct? Did I really know the human muddle? Has any man really mapped out civilization? It's so huge, complex, varied—so many disorganized forces—who can classify it—label it? It's bigger than our thought about it. We lay hands on only a few wisps of it! Life! Life itself—not our interpretation—is the great outworking force!"

And then again.

"We see certain tendencies and believe they will advance unhindered, but there may be other tendencies to counteract, change, even defeat these. No future can be predicted! And yet I was so sure of the future—so sure of what we are to build—that future which we keep modifying so persistently the moment it hits To-day."

In short, he had reached his *social manhood*—which meant to him, not dogma, but the willingness to arise every morning ready to reshape his course, prepared for any adventure, receptive, open-minded, and all willing to render his very life for what seemed good to do. Scientific reverence this, the willingness to experiment, to try, to test, and then, if the test failed, to grope for a new line of outlet, the readiness to reverse all he believed in in the face of a new and contradictory fact. He was a new Joe Blaine.

And so the spirit that sprang from those dead girls became a creative power, a patient, living strength.

And so in the blaze of new morning, in the be-

ginnings of a new life, Joe and Myra leaned over the rail of the boat, coming back, coming back to the ramparts and heights of the great World City. They saw full in the glory of the morning sun those tiers on tiers of towers rising to their lonely pinnacle. Beneath them harbor craft scurried about in the bright waters; above them rose the Big Brothers of the city looking out toward the sea. It seemed some vision builded of no human hands. It seemed winged and uplifted toward the skies, an immensity of power and beauty. It seemed to float on measureless waters, a magic metropolis, setting sail for the Arabian Nights.

Tears came into Joe's eyes. He held Myra's hand fast.

"Are you glad to get back?"

"Yes, glad, Joe."

"No more peace, no more green earth, Myra."

"I know it, Joe."

"Even our honeymoon—that can't be repeated, can it?"

"No," she said, sadly, "I guess it cannot."

"And this means work, hardship, danger, injustice—all the troubles of mankind."

She pressed his hand.

"Yet you're glad, Myra!"

"I am."

"Tell me why."

"Because," she mused, "it's the beginning of our real life together."

"How so *real?*"

Myra's eyes were suffused with tears.

"The common life—the life of people—the daily toil—the pangs and the struggles. I'm hungry for it all!"

He could have kissed her for the words.

"We'll do, Myra," he cried, "we'll do. Do you know what I see this morning?"

"What?"

"A new city! My old city, but all new."

"It's you that is new, Joe."

"And that's why I see the new city—a vision I shall see until some larger vision replaces it. Shall I tell you about it?"

"Tell me."

"It is the city of five million comrades. They toil all day with one another; they create all of beauty and use that men may need; they exchange these things with each other; they go home at night to gardens and simple houses, they find happy women there and sunburnt, laughing children. Their evenings are given over to the best play—play with others, play with masses, or play at home. They have time for study, time for art, yet time for one another. Each loosens in himself and gives to the world his sublime possibilities. A city of toiling comrades, of sparkling homes, of wondrous art, and joyous festival. That is the city I see before me!" He paused. "And to the coming of that city I dedicate my life."

She sighed.

"It's too bright, too good for human nature."

"Not for human nature," he whispered. "If only we are patient. If only we are content to add our one stone to its rising walls."

She pressed his hand again.

"Joe," she murmured, "what do you think you'll be doing a year from now?"

"I don't know," he smiled. "Perhaps editing—perhaps working with a strike—perhaps something else. But whatever it is, it will be some new adventure—some new adventure!"

So they entered that city hand in hand, the future all before them. And they found neither that City of the Future nor a City of Degradation, but a very human city full of very human people.

THE END

THE MUCKRAKERS

A series of American novels of Muckraking, Propaganda, and Social Protest

EDWARD BELLAMY
Equality
ARTHUR BULLARD
Comrade Yetta
CHARLES W. CHESNUTT
The Colonel's Dream
WINSTON CHURCHILL
Mr. Crewe's Career
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER
The Ways of the Hour
ERNEST H. CROSBY
Captain Jinks, Hero
REBECCA HARDING DAVIS
Waiting for the Verdict
IGNATIUS DONNELLY
The Golden Bottle
MARY EASTMAN
Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life as It Is
HAMLIN GARLAND
A Member of the Third House
ROBERT GRANT
The Orchid
SARAH J. HALE
Liberia: or Mr. Peyton's Experiments
ROBERT HERRICK
The Common Lot
RICHARD HILDRETH
The Slave; or Memoirs of Archy Moore
JOSIAH G. HOLLAND
Sevenoaks
JAMES M. HOPPER & FRED R. BECHDOLT
9009
FREDERIC C. HOWE
Confessions of a Monopolist
SYLVESTER JUDD
Margaret
REGINALD W. KAUFFMAN
The House of Bondage

DISCARDED
COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS
LIBRARY

1976
Gregg Press
2.00

HENRY F. KEENAN
The Money-Makers

DAVID R. LOCKE ("Petroleum V. Nasby")
A Paper City

JOAQUIN MILLER
Life Amongst the Modocs

JOHN AMES MITCHELL
The Silent War

SILAS WEIR MITCHELL
Autobiography of a Quack

JAMES OPPENHEIM
The Nine-Tenths

JOSEPH MEDILL PATTERSON
A Little Brother of the Rich

DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS
The Plum Tree

DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS
Susan Lenox

UPTON SINCLAIR
The Money-Changers

BAYARD TAYLOR
Hannah Thurston

ELIAS TOBENKIN
Witte Arrives

ALBION W. TOURGÉE
Murvale Eastman, Christian Socialist

ALBION W. TOURGÉE
Pactolus Prime

JOHN T. TROWBRIDGE
Neighbor Jackwood

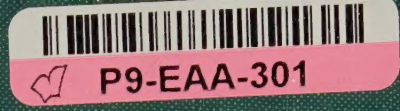
NATHANIEL BEVERLEY TUCKER
The Partisan Leader

HENRY K. WEBSTER
The Banker and the Bear

STEWART EDWARD WHITE
The Blazed Trail

BRAND WHITLOCK
The Thirteenth District

JOSIAH FLYNT WILLARD
The Little Brother


P9-EAA-301